EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW: MARVEL'S NEW UNIVERSE!
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COMICS FEATURE™
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PLUS WALT SIMONSON ON THOR
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JOE BARBERA
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HAPPY HAL'S HOWLINGS—

This is the summer of my happiness and the winter of my discontent, as a certain scribe once described an occasion far more momentous than this one. To me, though, this seems as significant. Once again, I am witness to the changing of the guard. The times are good and the times are sad.

COMICS FEATURE is reasonably healthy, selling more copies than any other publication of its kind although not really enough to be considered a really profitable magazine. It is getting by though and, so far at least—keep your fingers and toes crossed!—proving that a magazine about comics can survive on the newsstand and does not have to be consigned to the specialty shops.

The roster of contributing columnists is stronger than ever—while we have witnessed the departures of Stan Lee and Max Allan Collins, sadly—we have seen the immediate addition of the excellent Roy Thomas and Will Murray. And even Will Jacobs and Gerard Jones will launch a new SILVER AGE series to alternate with the pieces by Will Murray. And this time, Jacobs and Jones are preparing their installments just for us, not merely allowing us to excerpt a book-in-the-works!

COMICS FEATURE has successfully maintained its monthly status and proven that both quality and deadlines can be maintained. Feature pieces, primarily by James Van Hise, have been better than ever with exclusive coverage of major books and characters in a way that no other publication has ever been able to accomplish.

All in all, everything would appear to be going well and relatively calmly. And it was—until Art Director Robert Lewis dropped his bombshell. It seems that both he and his family have not been happy with our move from the Sunshine State of the east coast, Florida, to the Golden West of California and want to go home. They had left family there and missed them and feel far less at home and comfortable in the hectic world of LaLaLand—as Ron Goulart, another California expatriate, put it when we first moved—than in the secure familiarity of Plant City. And so they loaded up the truck and moved back. I certainly wish them the best of luck. I'll miss them, a lot....

I remember when Bob first joined the staff, when we were struggling to put out issue 18, and it was just him and myself working on the magazine—other than the wonderful and supportive writers, of course. He not only designed and pasted up the whole blasted thing, he drew the cover and hand cut the separations as well! And then he was there when the magazine first went out into the wide world of the newsstand, beyond the specialty shops, and we were all trying to find our way without a road map. Both he and I spent many evenings together in the offices and over a quick meal, planning the magazine, trying to figure out what we were doing wrong, and right, and what changes should be made. Then he was there, with his whole family, when we drove the almost 3,000 miles from Florida to California. His car kept breaking down but somehow we all made it. And now he'll be there no longer. It will take quite some time before I stop yelling for him when we receive a proof back from the printer and the color looks wrong, when a piece comes in that runs longer than planned and we have to make last minute changes, when the camera breaks down, or when those thousand and one other things happen that make a life of publishing magazines so exciting and frustrating. It hurts, but I'll carry on. Like **COMICS FEATURE**, Happy Hal is a survivor.

And I have a wonderful pair of people to carry on the tradition of excellence that Bob established. Their ideas aren't always the same ones that Bob would have had and their approaches are sometimes different. Not wrong, just different. We are working together so that we can understand how each other thinks about a design problem. With time we'll begin to mesh, perhaps as well as I did with Bob. They bring a great love of comic books and new ideas to the work. While the thoughts of Robert Lewis are always there on paper, in several years worth of issues, and his voice is no further than the phone, we have a foundation to build upon. And the new building should be even more beautiful and stronger, a merging of the old with the new.

Ruth Kennedy has been Bob's right hand since the beginning of the year and many of the things that are best about the magazine are actually done by her. She knows a lot and was taught even more by Bob. But now she's more than ready to tackle it herself. She provides a strong element of continuity.

Jim Keegan is new to **COMICS FEATURE** although he has been doing all of the camerawork and briefly handled the same job that Ruth has held, as Bob's assistant. He is a graduate of the Art Institute of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia College of Art. His experience is diverse, including working for the Philadelphia Daily News, acting as art director of B&E Publications **Kennel Review**, where he designed a thick four-color monthly magazine, and ads for Hills Pet Products, Quaker Oats and Ralston Purina. It would not be fair to say that **COMICS FEATURE** has gone to the dogs!

I have already worked with Jim Keegan as he co-designed **The Godzilla Book**, and took full responsibility for **The Superhero Files: Superman and Spider-Man on Screen**, **The Star Trek Movie Files** and **The X-Men Comic Files**. Happy Hal is confident that the new team of Keegan & Kennedy will add to the fine tradition set by Bob Lewis, and by Richard Howell and Carol Kalish before him.

While I will personally miss Bob Lewis for some time to come, I am confident that you will enjoy **COMICS FEATURE** more than ever.

By the way, when you are looking through the issue, don't miss out on participating in both the **SCOREBOARD** and the **PICK YOUR FAVORITE HERO CONTEST**. They should both be good fun. Also pay special attention to the special artwork that Marvel and Walt Simonson were kind enough to supply us with for the feature piece and the wonderful character sketches that Joe Barbera made available for his interview.

Finally, as you have no doubt noticed, we have used a very talented cover artist named Martin Cannon for the past several issues. Please do let us know what you think of his work. I know that he's anxious to hear from you.

Till next issue....

—HAPPY HAL

COMICS FEATURE

August 1986

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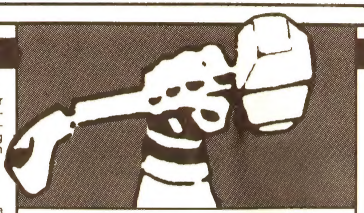

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MUTANTS & THUNDER GODS

When Marvel Comics needs a change in direction on one of their titles they call in the first family of comic books. After revitalizing Thor, Walt Simonson is about to take on the pencilling of one of Marvel's most popular comic books, **X-Factor**. And this time he'll be working with writer Louise Simonson, who was brought in to solve some serious story problems. The original team that launched this title, writer artist and editor, are all no longer on the book. But there are a lot of exciting new plans for the title nonetheless. And while Louise continues to also write the team she created, **Power Pack**, Walter has still more exciting events ahead for **Thor**. In fact one storyline involves **X-Factor**, **Thor** and the **X-Men**!

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PREVIEW: Marvel's New Universe

Contributing Editor John Peel paid a personal visit on Will Murray to learn just what kind of realism Marvel really wants for their New Universe. This ex-soldier and scribe of the adventures of **The Merc** for the New Universe, as well as stories for **Savage Tales** and **The Nam** for the old one, explained a few facts of life about some very unusual action tales!

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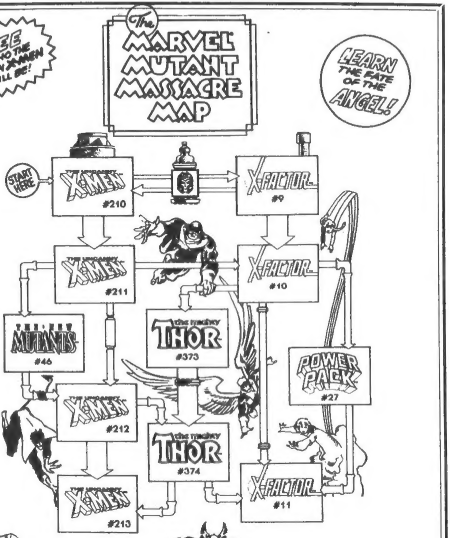
FEATURE NEWS

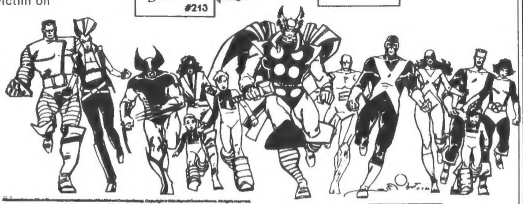
MUTANT MASSACRE!!!

Marvel Comics is going to have one helluva special mini-series without even creating a new title! In fact, in many ways this epic will be more important to comic book fans and readers than the two maxi-publicity **Secret Wars.** During the course of the story, half of the X-Men will leave the team to be replaced by new team members. Superheroes will die—rather popular in comic books these days, it seems—and loads of other important events will occur including the alteration of the powers of several long-standing characters.

The feature interview this issue tells the tale of what lies ahead in **X-Factor** and how that will tie into several of the other mutant books. The chart which accompanies this piece was prepared by Marvel Comics to assist readers in understanding just what is going on!

Besides involving **X-Factor** issues 9, 10, 11; **X-Men** 210, 211, 212, 213; **New Mutants** 46; and **Thor** 373 and 374. Also affected will be some peripheral titles including **Daredevil** 238 by Ann Nocenti and Sal Buscema. Sabretooth needs to work up a killing rage before tackling X-Factor, and poor DD is the victim on which he intends to practice!





THE ABOVE CHART IS PREPARED BY MARVEL COMICS AND WILL APPEAR BOTH AS AN IN-HOUSE AD AND AS A TWO COLOR POSTER.

Dr. Strange & Cloak and Dagger to appear in new Strange Tales

Strange Tales is one of the oldest titles in the Marvel pantheon. In fact it existed prior to the launching of Marvel Comics with the first issue of the **Fantastic Four**. Originally it was published under the Atlas Comics (not the one which briefly flourished in the mid-Seventies) banner showcasing horror tales. When superheroes swept the company it provided a birth for the solo stories of The Human Torch, then his teamups with the Thing, then a backup strip for Dr. Strange and finally a home for the modern day espionage adventures of Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD. For most of its superheroic run, the book featured dual strips similar to the practice followed in **Tales of Suspense** and **Tales to Astonish**.

Now **Strange Tales** is back, once again featuring the adventures of The Master of the Mystic Arts with a new backup strip, Coak and Dagger. The series will begin with a new issue number one, although it will be noted that it is a second volume.

Cloak and Dagger will lose their own book with the eleventh issue, shipping November 4. That issue will be a double-sized Christmas tale penciled by June Brigman and inked by Terry Austin and include a second story which will conclude the duo's search for the source of drug shipments to the U.S.

Beginning with the first issue of the new series, writer Bill Mantlo and artists Bret Blevins and Terry Austin will begin a journey which will return the two to New York and introduce a new supporting cast. "In addition to the criminals Cloak and Dagger combat, some new super powered antagonists will enter the scene, adding a new sort of action to the stories," says editor Carl Potts.

STRANGE TALES
Starring the fabulous HUMAN TORCH
STRANGE TALES
THE GREATEST ACTION-THRILLER OF ALL TIME!
NICK FURY AGENT OF SHIELD

Dr. Strange will end with issue 81, concluding his battle with the usurper to the mantle of Sorceror Supreme. "This sorcerer has stolen everything Strange owns, from his sanctum to the Eye of Agomotto to the Book of the Vishanti, all of his most potent weapons," Potts says. "Before it's over, Strange will suffer some very real losses."

As result, in **Strange Tales** Strange will rebuild from the ground up, combining adventure with an exploration of the man Stephen Strange. The creative team will continue to be Peter Gillis, Chris Warner and Randy Emberlin.

"**Strange Tales** is one of the most famous series Marvel has ever published," Potts claims, "And everyone associated with its revival plans to produce material that will live up to the high standards associated with the title."

ENGLEHART QUITS DAREDEVIL

Steve Englehart has quit writing **Daredevil** almost before he began! After only one issue, he has left the book due to what he terms "Lack of proper editorial support." Englehart had written his first issue in what was to be a regular stint on the book when it was revealed to him that a story which would be appearing in the book prior to his first issue "blew a huge hole in my story!" Feeling that he had not been properly apprised of continuity developments, Englehart says, "I just decided that I didn't need this and quit the title."

Englehart is presently in discussions with DC Comics about a possible **Shadow of the Batman** series. Englehart along with Marshall Rogers crafted a number of Batman tales in the mid-Seventies that were very popular and were recently reprinted in a deluxe format. This potential new series is not the "Batman: The Second Year" issues of the regular title which have been variously attributed to Englehart but which are in fact being written by Mike Barr.

LETTERS

Send all comments and correspondence to:
COMICS FEATURE
8399 Topanga Canyon Blvd.
Suite 210
Canoga Park, CA 91304

Dear Hal,

Well, you literally asked for this, so I hope you don't end up regretting it. Now that you've been warned, I'll attempt a constructive critique of CF.

Methodical creature that I am, I'll review the columns in alphabetical order. Rest assured, creative staff, that this is no indication of my personal preferences.

Animated Antics is something that has been missing from the trade publications for too long. It serves not only as a nostalgic look back at things like the Warner Brothers classics, Jonny Quest and Bakshi's Fritz the Cat for us old-timers, but also as an opportunity for younger readers to experience some of the magic that made these films special for us. With the proliferation of VCR's in today's society, distributors are constantly seeking new material to present in pre-packaged form and a few well-placed requests on the part of fandom could be the catalyst necessary to see some of these gems returned to circulation. P.S. — Columns on Walter Lantz and the old Terrytoons would be nice.

Feature News is always informative and usually interesting. However, the fact that many of the items are reprinted almost verbatim from other sources gives them the look of in-house promotions and press releases rather than honest reactions to the news being presented. I would suggest rewriting these articles in order to eliminate their, "gee, you've just gotta' buy this" tone.

Fun & Profit manages to do just what the masthead indicates; it strikes a balance between the esoteric joy and the monetary pleasures of comic collecting. What more can I say?

Games are not a personal favorite of mine, because of the amount of time required to play—the same reason I gave up *Monopoly*. I do, however, recognize their potential for intellectual and creative stimulation in those with more leisure time than I have. It might prove interesting if Mr. Perrin would devote a column or two to tips on developing better game strategies and characters rather than concentrate only on reviews. I'm certain someone with his vast knowledge and experience in the field would have much to offer in the line of helpful hints to players.

Although there is much to be said about the dollar value of *Golden Age* comics, the truth of the matter is that very few of them had much to offer in the line of plot and character development. Aside from their historical value, the vast majority of the GA titles are — in a word — borrriing! Might I suggest an occasional shift to some of the worthy titles of the late 40s and the early-to-mid 50s (like E.C.! for instance). *[As a matter of fact, Jim Van Hise would like to do something along those lines about comics in the early 50s which fall between The Golden Age and the beginning of The Silver Age. —Happy Hal]*

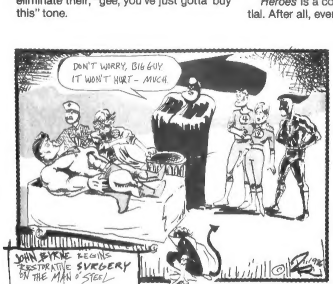
Heroes is a column with endless potential. After all, every character is someone's favorite. Even the ones I never gave much thought to, come alive for me, thanks to the nostalgic flavor Mr. Van Hise gives his articles. As long as he is able to maintain his enthusiasm for the characters he writes about, I see no need for any changes in this column. How about one on Magnus, Robot Fighter?

Letters — Does the name *Feature Backlash* do anything for you? Oh well. I couldn't pass up my shot at a free subscription.

I can't see where the *Listings* department serves any great need since most fans are already familiar with the shipping dates of their favorite magazines and the information provided does not present any pertinant data that might persuade them to try different titles. To expand the information in the listings would mean compressing other articles, so it might be best to limit them to new titles or just do away with the department altogether.

The Silver Age column, like GA, could be improved by expanding coverage to include development of the 70s. As it stands, once you've pointed out that Marvel revolutionized the industry, what's left to say about the 60s? Also, how about an occasional art on the non-hero titles of Dell and G. ' ?

Strip Sea... is terrific fun! It spotlights the great talents so often ignored by the rest of the industry while at the same time educating us all as to the roots of comics. But be careful about ignoring the more present-day strip artists. To do so would be counterproductive to the spirit of the column. —Victor H. Meisner



PICK YOUR FAVORITE HERO!

Sometimes contests start in the strangest places! This time it was Mike Benton who got an idea going, although he has no idea that he has done so as of yet. He was just writing his normal installment of his **FUN & PROFIT** column and happened to hit upon the subject of what starts people collecting. It turns out that most begin to build their pile when they fall in love with a particular hero, and launch headfirst into a character-based collection. While I certainly will not be going into detail here as I couldn't hope to match either the eloquence or the expertise of the esteemed Mr. Benton, I will tell you how this led to our contest.

The next step in the chain of events began when Art Directors Jim Keegan and Ruth Kennedy were pasting up Mike's column and noticed the heading as well as the

couple of cartoons that departing Art Director Robert Lewis had commissioned prior to his departing. Upon noticing the piece, Ruth let me know that she thought that a contest picking the most popular hero was a great idea. Puzzled, I walked off trying to remember when we did that and what it was in the issue that I had edited that could be described in this way. Since I am usually buried under manuscripts and rushing along about my duties, I thought that something had simply slipped my mind. That is, until a few days later when I proofread the issue and still couldn't figure out what they were talking about!

Then it dawned on me. They had misunderstood the piece Mike had done, the one headlined "Favorite Heroes!" By then I had begun to give some thought to the contest that they thought we were running, but weren't. Mike makes the excellent point that although some collectors later turn to following a particular artist or writer or some other such factor, the initial draw of comic books is the heroes. And that's quite true. On the whole, a particular character that appeals to a large audience will continue to be popular even as the artists and writers play musical chairs. While there are certainly exceptions to this rule, they are few and far between. Face it, when we want top prose we pick up a book not a comic book—sorry guys, but it's true. And when we want to peruse some beautiful artwork, we can find much better reproduction outside of the comic book page. No...we read comic books because of the four color antics of our favorite heroes and villains. Even those of us who would like to think of ourselves as a bit more sophisticated! Well, there's really nothing wrong with that. But since this is true it does seem a bit odd that while there have been all sorts of contests to select the most popular writer, artist, inker, colorist, letterer, office boy, cover, creative team and just about everything else...recent years have never offered a contest to pick favorite characters/heroes!

Leaping in where more intelligent editors fear to tread, I, Happy Hal, intend to use the pages of **COMICS FEATURE** to fill the gap! So, I hereby declare the opening of **The Official Pick Your Favorite Hero Contest**! Now let me tell you some of the groundrules:

1) The hero must have been published in comic book format at some time during the past fifty years, comic strip or animated characters that have never appeared in comic book form don't count;

2) The hero must have either headlined his own comic book or feature (example: Martian Manhunter in **House of Mystery/Detective Comics**) or served as prominent member of a team that headlines a comic book (example: Beast Boy is in the Teen Titans and formerly was a member of the Doom Patrol);

3) The hero does not have to still be published, in fact his whole company could have disappeared, and he doesn't even have to be alive;

4)The term hero is being used broadly to cover everyone from Binky to Jonah Hex to the obvious Superman/Spider-Man type.

And that's it. There are no other rules. There is also no prize except the gratification of bringing a cheer for a character that has brought you a lot of entertainment. Yes, we will print the results. If enough letters show up each month, I'll keep you posted as we go along. The final results will be announced in our special 50th anniversary issue which will bear a November cover date.

Please send all entries to:

COMICS FEATURE
Favorite Hero Contest
8399 Topanga Cyn Blvd
Canoga Park, CA 91304

SCORECARD

In the interests of best serving our readers and as a tribute to the greatest editor that ever lived—in Happy Hal's opinion at least!—John Campbell, we are launching a new feature with this issue. Years ago, in **Astounding/Analog** magazine, which he edited so brilliantly for so many years, Campbell asked his readers to rate the contents of his magazine in the order in which they enjoyed them, from most favorite to least, and published the results. This served to give him a guide as to which types of material to most pursue and helped to let the writers know how well the readers thought they were doing. So, in the interests of originality—or, if an idea's good why not steal it!—we will begin doing that in **COMICS FEATURE**. Again, there is no prize for this, but you can be a real help to Ol' Happy Hal and have a real voice in picking the contents of your favorite magazine! And why not give the writers you most enjoy something of a boost as well? So here's how this one works:

Each issue we'll list the contents of the mag (features, columns and departments) on the contents page—where else?—and you simply jot them down on a letter or postcard with a number next to them, ranking them in the order in which you most enjoyed them—for example: Happy Hal's Howlings, number one! As soon as these begin to roll in, which should start with the ratings for the contents of this issue, we will rank the articles in order of your preference and print the results on the letters page each issue. We will use this information as one of the factors in selecting the contents of future issues. I must warn you that while this information will be very important in choosing what appears in **COMICS FEATURE**, it will not be the sole factor. Sometimes a piece or type of material is simply too important not to run and even though we know it will not find favor with most of our readers we will run it anyway. But—don't worry—we will make sure that you love most of what is in each issue. Fair? We're not stupid and do know that we have to keep our readers happy!

EXPLORING THE

MARVEL NEW UNIVERSE™

WITH DOUG MURRAY

BY JOHN PEEL

It takes a special kind of writer to create the realism that Marvel Comics wants for their New Universe....

Doug Murray is a big man. Impressive. Quiet. He is also one of Marvel's newest writing superstars, having scripted the tremendously popular "5th of the 1st" series in **Savage Tales**. Due to the strong response of these little tales, he was given his own new title, **The Nam**, and will be writing one of the New Universe books, **The Merc**, beginning with the third issue. Marvel is looking for something special in their New Universe titles and Murray's credentials to write action series are without doubt. He doesn't just write about gunfire, he's lived through it!

REAL BULLETS

"I was born during the blizzard of '47," he relates, "which made my mother's internment a little longer than normal. I grew up in Brooklyn, moving to Long Island when I was eleven.

"By that time—1958—**Famous Monsters of Filmland** (the predecessor of today's **MONSTERLAND**) was on the stands, which was really nice, because I was interested in that sort of thing but didn't think that anybody else was. By the time issue 8 or 9 came out, I had written a couple of letters to Forrie Ackerman (the editor), and he wrote back to me and asked me to do an article. He didn't know how old I was—about 12 at the time!" he remembers with amusement. "So I did a piece about *St. George and the Seven Curses*, which became *The Magic Sword*. That was for issue 13, and I worked for Forrie for thirty or forty issues after that. I left, not really in dispute, but because Forrie wasn't crediting people for what they were doing. And he wasn't really paying in money, he was paying in merchandise. Around that time, 1962, there was a science fiction magazine called **Worlds of If** that made a policy of accepting a first story by a new writer every issue. So I sold them two, under different names!

"I had begun to make money as a writer at thirteen or fourteen. I worked for the sweat 'zines—magazines like **Man's Story**—under various pen-names, which I won't give out! By the time I got to college, I was working for a lot of film magazines. I started going to the State University of Stony Brook, but wasn't really happy there. The drug problem was widespread, and I wasn't getting much out of school so I transfered to Columbia University (in New York City) in the start of my junior year. I was playing basketball for the varsity, and really tore up a leg in practice in the summertime. Dropping out of school for a semester to learn to walk again, I (lost my student deferment and) was drafted the day before Thanksgiving. When I tried to appeal because I was back in school by then, I was told that the draft board was on vacation until New Years. I was scheduled to report before they were due to come back from vacation," he recalls with a wry expression.

"I got my degree just before I shipped out to basic training in Ft. Jackson (S.C.) in January of '68. During my military career, I made a point of going for any schooling I was offered. If I had to spend time there, I might as well spend as little time in the field and as much as possible in school, I reasoned. So I went to Jump School, Ranger School, Pathfinder School, whatever was offered. When I finished in April of '68, Vietnam was hot. I became an observor, Forward Artillery, and their average life span was about seven weeks! So I immediately took an option, re-enlisted for two more years in exchange for guaranteed school and a guaranteed station. That time I went to Radar

AN EXCLUSIVE EARLY GLIMPSE

School, Air Defense Radar, which was essentially anti-aircraft systems. While I was at school in Texas, I made another mistake—graduating first in my class, making me a Spec Five, equivalent to a sergeant. The Army had decided to build an anti-personnel radar around Da Nang Air Base in Nam, and since the table of organization said we couldn't have radar technicians in Vietnam, they decided to send people from the school. So I got sent with a Lieutenant, a Staff Sergeant and four other troopers who had graduated high in the class.

"The first night that we were there, after landing at Da Nang, we got hit by a rocket attack. The Lieutenant and the Sergeant were both killed almost immediately, leaving me in command. We built the radar, and the Viet Cong destroyed it. We pushed the perimeter back a couple of klicks and built it again. This time it held together, so we stayed there awaiting orders to come back stateside," he recollects making it clear he doesn't just write about war. "In the intirim, I had become a Staff Sergeant. We were waiting about two weeks for orders, and the Colonel of the regiment we were attached to—I believe it was the 17th Infantry—decided that it was stupid to have an NCO sitting around doing nothing. He started sending me out on patrols. Considering I was there for purposes other than advancing my career, my watchword was to first make sure that everyone came back in one piece. Then, second in priority, to try to accompiish the mission. Which was exactly the opposite of what the Army says you're supposed to do! The outcome was that since the guys knew I would go out of my way to bring people back alive, we would accomplish a lot more.

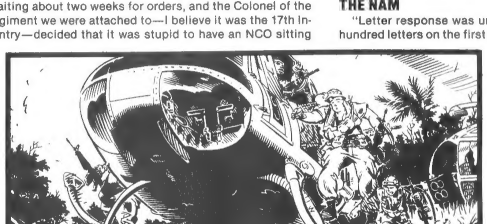
"We went through Tet in '68, and in about February of '69, I got my orders to come back stateside. A week before I was scheduled to process out, I took a patrol out and was ambushed—shot in the leg pretty good. I spent some time in a hospital in Japan and then came back stateside on a cane and went to work in Fort Jackson, in Brooklyn, as well as for NASA. Eventually, I was sent to Korea and spent a little more time in Nam, doing exactly what I had done before, building radar systems and so on. Most of my two tours were in Nam."

Murray continues, "When I got out of the Army in '72, my degree and teacher's certificate weren't worth very much. Virtually everybody who had tried to duck the Army by becoming a teacher was teaching, so there weren't any jobs. I tried to make a living as a comic book writer for a year, working mostly for DC Comics. I wrote **Our Army at War**, and worked for the **Monster Times** as well as **Inside Comics**, making some money, but not a lot. Eventually, I got a job working for a major bank, in computer operations.

"I had known Larry Hama for years, from when he worked with Neal Adams. He had just gotten the go-ahead on **Savage Tales** and wanted to include a Vietnam series. Since I was the only Vietnam vet he knew who was a comic book writer, he called me in to do it. And that's how we came to do '5th of the 1st'.

THE NAM

"Letter response was unexpected—we got four or five hundred letters on the first story—so Larry proposed doing a Vietnam War comic, and **The Nam** came out of that. As much as Mike Golden can make time for it, the '5th of the 1st' series will continue. He has two more stories at the moment that he hasn't finished, one called 'The Tunnel Rat' and one called 'Frag', which is about a fragmentation incident. Golden has plans to gather the stories in book form for European release, so he needs at least six finished stories. But right now, he's too busy with **The Nam** to get involved with that," explains Murray.



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"**The Nam** will be out this summer. As Larry likes to say, it's an eight-year miniseries. It's unusual in comic books, because it happens in real time. The first issue takes place in February, 1966, and the second in March, 1966. When a month passes between issues coming out on the newsstands, a month's time passes in the storyline for the characters. We start in February '66 with a young man named Ed Marks making his way to Vietnam, and learning what it's like there. After eight or nine months, we'll see a

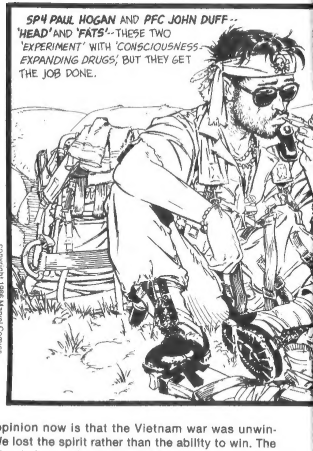
replacement come in for him as he ships back stateside. We're concentrating on the 23rd Infantry Division, which we picked for a lot of really good reasons. We wanted a unit that had moved all over Vietnam, so we'd have a lot of different situations to put them in; it had to be a unit that was there from '66 to the pullout in '74, our scheduled time period. The 23rd was perfect, because it was formed in Vietnam as part of the 25th Infantry in 1966, and was disbanded after the fall of Saigon in '74.

"It started in Chu Chai, a little township to the south and west of Saigon, where they found a fairly substantial tunnel network left by the Viet Cong, then progressing north as the war went on. They eventually went into Cambodia in 1970, and then pulled out in '74 with the rest of the troops," he notes.

One thing that the book is aiming for is a strong sense of realism. "Every story that takes place in the book," he explains, "will be based on a real event. It may not necessarily have happened to the 23rd Infantry per se, but if we say it happened in March '66, it will have happened that March to some unit. We're telescoping events, trying to make it as little like other war comics as possible, because this is not a situation where people were doing heroic things—jumping up and racing towards machine guns, firing from the hip! That's just not going to happen. They are going to react like real people, fall to the ground and freeze in place; they aren't going to get themselves killed by doing something stupid. Using real time helps us to do that, because it's like people sending letters home. One issue will look at February '66, and one month later, in the next issue, a month will have passed. For *everybody*. We may have lost the thread of what was going on at some point. Say there's been fighting going on between two people for something stupid in one issue...when we get back the next, the fight will have passed over. And we won't know what's happened until we find out in the course of the story, through dialogue.

"It allows us to do things a little more straight-forwardly and realistically than in a regular comic book story, where there is no real feeling of time. We will have a person who readers can identify with throughout—but it won't always be the same character." Murray notes that in real life people do die and to keep the book true-to-life, "there's no guarantee that he (the main protagonist) won't be killed. We'll have five or six characters, but I'm not going to guarantee that anyone in particular will be there from issue to issue. It's not a regular comic book, it's far more like real life. In real life, people just die, or things happen. Things sometimes happen for no reason, it's fate. And that's how this comic book will be. That's the way of the world, the way life is."

Marvel was a little unsure of where to target their new magazine at first. "There's a great interest in it," Murray explains, "outside of the regular comic book field. There have been articles on it because there's a great interest in the Vietnam war. This is healthy because, in South America, we're getting into the same kind of thing that got us into Vietnam in the first place. There's an old saying about those who do not learn from history being doomed to repeat it....


SP4 PAUL HOGAN AND PFC JOHN DUFF--
'HEAD' AND 'FATS'--THESE TWO
'EXPERIMENT' WITH 'CONSCIOUSNESS-
EXPANDING DRUGS,' BUT THEY GET
THE JOB DONE.
copyright 1988 Marvel Comics

"My opinion now is that the Vietnam war was unwinnable. We lost the spirit rather than the ability to win. The same thing is happening in Central America where we're letting things get out of hand because we're not willing to take a firm stand.

"People who fought in Nam are becoming parents, becoming middle-aged, and they tend to think about it as 'Their War', in much the same way that the older generation remembers World War II. Hopefully, **The Nam** will hit the same market as the Time Life series and other such things. Aside from nostalgia, the book is very realistic. Kids who have heard about it from their fathers will be able to see how it was. Another thing is the **G.I. Joe** phenomenon. That's a popular comic. A lot of the popularity is because of the hardware, which comes largely out of the Vietnam war. Our stories are nothing like **G.I. Joe** stories in terms of stark heroism but there is a connection. The audience that reads **G.I. Joe** will read **The Nam**."

One major asset of the book may also be a problem, Murray explains, "Mike Golden, who's drawing the book is intent on doing everything properly. He doesn't want anyone writing in and telling him that he got the sights wrong on an M16, or that he got the wrong markings on a Huey, or that he got a Huey Mark 1 when it should have been a Mark 2, or whatever. It's slowing him down, but he's turning in a beautiful book! Mike's not a veteran, but he's a fan of that era."

Editor Larry Hama is also a vet, but he never served in Vietnam. "He was stationed in the European theatre during the Vietnam war," Murray notes. "But he does have the military outlook. He spent his time in the Army, and knows what's like. I'm sure we'll get a nasty letter or two telling us that *something* is wrong, but hopefully it won't be

anything that's major! The very first story, about a join-up between the 23rd Infantry and an Australian outfit that discovered some tunnels, is something that actually happened. And I have a story about the Cedar Falls operation, which is where they found a massive tunnel system to the north about three months later. We've got stories in the works about three-day passes in Saigon, so we can see what things were like there. We'll be doing things about long-range recon patrols, something about the river boats. We'll get something in about the air wars. We can do just about anything, as long as it falls within the scope of what really happened there," Murray enthusiastically stresses.

ENTER THE NEW UNIVERSE

One of the events everyone interested in comic books is most curious about is the New Marvel Universe, their 25th anniversary bombshell. Part of Marvel's New Universe is a hero called The Merc. Murray will be taking over his exploits with the third issue. "The New Universe is created by something called *The White Event*," he explains, admitting that he knows little about it himself as yet—just enough to enable him to write his stories. "The books were masterminded by Archie Goodwin, who created most of the characters. The Merc is the only character in this New Universe who is not a superhero. He's a West Point dropout who spent three tours in the Army, including three tours in Vietnam. He's really disappointed with the world at large. His father is a career soldier who disowned him when he left West Point, because he wouldn't follow the family tradition. His wife divorced him because he got out of the Army and couldn't make a living, and he's got a son who he loves but doesn't get to see very often.

"He's a character who can't keep any money in his pockets. Aside from the fact that he makes a living going around getting shot at, he's got the fatal flaw of having compassion. He'll take a chance on saving the life of an innocent bystander, even in the middle of a mission. This could end up with his losing his own life, or missing the timetable, or not making a pickup, or something like that. He's the kind of a person who can't pass up a bird with a broken wing without helping it, regardless of what the outcome may be. And because of this, he's unsuccessful. His life hasn't worked out the way he wanted it to because he has to live by his own ethical code, his own morals. He decided that the Vietnam war was an immoral war, even though he fought in it, and this cut him off from his parents, whom he loves. He has to do it; he has to be true to himself. As a result, his personal life is unsuccessful, but he's good at what he does—he's a good mercenary," notes author Murray.

"He's also a little unusual in that he is not that magic age that all comic book characters seem to be. He's about 40 years old, he smokes too much and he's a big, heavy guy. If you were walking down the street and saw him coming toward you, you'd walk down a sidestreet to get away from him. He's really scary looking. But he's living in the real world. He has an apartment somewhere in the West Village, owned by a person called Treetop, who is the contracter for the mercenary team that the Merc heads. As time passes, that situation will change somewhat. Treetop doles out money to him from their various contracts, because the Merc doesn't know how to use his money wisely, which is a problem," Murray hints, suggesting possible storylines to come.

"He's a specialist in tactics, essentially. He's the team leader and makes the plans, leading the team into action. But he's not an expert in everything. There's a guy named Mal, an Australian, who's the expert in explosives, but who may not appear in every story. It depends on who is needed for each mission. There's Doc, a girl who used to be a Vietcong medic, who became disenchanted with the Communist regime. The Merc brought her back to the United States. Treetop is a flier, who loves to fly above all else. There's the Sergeant Major, a British character, who's a troop trainer. We will introduce characters, and characters will leave for a variety of reasons.

"It's set in the real world," concludes Murray, "and the first story, by Peter David, involves an assault on a character very similar to Ferdinand Marcos. There'll be a lot of that kind of thing. We'll try to tie in to events in the real world where possible. There will also be crossovers with other characters from the New Universe (but not the normal Marvel Universe). One of them is a CIA agent with psionic powers, and he's easy to tie in with. The CIA is the sort of organization who would hire the mercenaries for some mission they can't do for various reasons. It's a tough concept to work with, because we have to make it look like something other than the **A-Team**! We'll make it a little more real world, people will get shot!" And that, according to editor-in-chief Jim Shooter, is the byword of the New Universe—realism. But more on this next issue as we expand our coverage of this exciting new development in comic books!

FUN & PROFIT

BY MIKE BENTON

Who's your favorite comic book character?

Everybody, whether they are a serious collector or a casual comic book reader, has one favorite character they like above all the rest.

Today's fan would probably say, "Wolverine," "Daredevil," "Spider-Man" or "Batman." Twenty years ago the fan favorites were the "Flash," "Green Lantern," "Superman" or (again) "Spider-Man."

Most people become comic collectors first because they like a particular comic book character. Only later do they discover favorite artists, companies or titles.

My first comic collection in 1958 consisted of 150 comic books with Donald Duck. I bought **Uncle Scrooge, Walt Disney Comics and Stories** — anything with Donald and the boys.

It's no different today. Collectors everywhere have a special place in their hearts for the comic character that introduced them to the world of comic books and fantasy.

Cat Yronwode, editor of Eclipse Comics, once told me that it was Dr. Strange who lured her back to the world of comic collecting after an absence of several years. "I had to have every comic book with Dr. Strange — the **Defenders**, **Strange Tales** and all the cameo appearances he ever made, even if it was only for a single panel."

Her love for Dr. Strange eventually led Cat into compiling an index to all the spells and chants he used. The index is still in use by Marvel comic creators today.

E. Nelson Bridwell, an editor and writer for DC comics, has long been known as the world's premier Superman fan. If you want to know what Clark Kent had for breakfast twenty years ago, Mr. Bridwell is the man to ask.

Frank Miller's sojourn on Batman is another return to a childhood favorite. Miller has often stated that the Dark Detective was one of the major influences on his decision to go into comics.

John Byrne's stint on the Fantastic Four also reflects his early love for the characters. "I grew up on Kirby's Fantastic Four," Byrne has said, "and for awhile it was truly 'The World's Greatest Comic.' "

Having a favorite comic book character is one of the things that makes comic collecting so much fun. A popular way to collect is to try to assemble a collection of every comic book with your favorite character.

Last week at a comic convention, I had the chance to talk with collectors about their favorite comic book character,and their approaches to collecting.

"Daredevil, absolutely Daredevil," Chip told me. "I have two mint sets of **Daredevil** from 1 on up. Well, almost mint. I'm picking up my second 7 at the con. I have all the Miller issues in triplicate, but I really like the old Daredevil, back when he had that funky-looking yellow costume."

As Chip left, I saw the initials "D.D." on the back of his Daredevil-red tee shirt.

Across the convention floor, a man in his fifties was opening a mysterious-looking briefcase. I edged closer.

He pulled out copy after copy of **Jumbo Comics** and **Sheena Comics** from the 1940s. "When I was a kid, I loved the jungle movies," he said, "but it was Sheena, Queen of the Jungle, that did it for me. I have just about every comic book that she appeared in. Last year, I paid $800 for **Jumbo** 1, the first appearance of Sheena. What a dame!"

As I listened to collectors talking about the comics they collected, I realized that for all the talk about "hot" artists and investment titles, many buy and save comics simply because they like a specific character.

Collecting comics by character is a lot of fun. Here are some practical tips to get you started on your Character Collection:

COMIC FEATURE'S GUIDE TO CREATING A CHARACTER COLLECTION

1) [redacted] This is the toughest part about building a collection based upon one character. You may never know *all* the issues he or she has appeared in. The price guide is helpful in locating some cross-over and team-up appearances.

COLLECTING YOUR FAVORITES!

Buy the issues that are likely to be in demand by other collectors. For example, if you are collecting Daredevil, go for the early Miller issues as soon as you can, before all the people who collect everything Frank Miller has done drive the prices up.

3) Be alert to the upcoming issues that might feature you favorite besides the obvious ones. For example, if you're really an X-Men completist, you're going to have to have the issues of **Marvel Age** that mention them only in passing. Giveaway comics, such as the **X-Men at the Dallas State Fair**, are other obscure items that must be run down by a devoted character collector.

4) Have several collections going at once! The comic field is too vast and varied to collect only one character, even if that character is someone as popular as Superman or Spider-Man. I always suggest that collectors concentrate on one major favorite, and then pick one or two really minor, obscure or offbeat characters to concentrate on. (Ambush Bug is one that jumps to mind!) After all, anybody can have a complete Dr. Strange collection, but how many people can proudly point to a complete set of all the appearances of Manbat?

Also when you start a character collection, realize that if you pick a popular or long-running comic character, you've got work cut out for you. I remember when I first entered comic fandom back in 1965, I met a man who had every comic book that Superman appeared in — **Action 1, Superman 1, Superboy 1, Jimmy Olsen, Lois Lane, Adventure** issues with Superboy—the works.

At that time, he had just paid the outrageous sum of $75 for **Action Comics** 1. Today, you would have to be an idiot or rich (or better yet, a rich idiot) to try to collect every comic book with a Superman appearance!

If you want to be a completist when you collect by character, then choose your character carefully.

Obviously, characters that have been popular since the 1940s are out. Superman, Batman, Captain Marvel, Wonder Woman and other Golden Age greats will cost you a fortune to collect in-depth. Only advanced collectors try to assemble complete collections of these characters.

If you do like a long-published character, you might wish to limit your collecting to a certain time period. For example, I collect only the Superman issues and titles edited by Mort Weisinger, which are from the years 1958 to 1967.

A younger collector I know collects all the appearances and issues of Spider-Man after issue 100. And most X-Men collectors still only collect the "new" X-Men from issue 94 and up, and leave the earlier issues from the 1960s alone.

Of course one way you can have a complete collection of a certain comic character is to concentrate on the new ones. You can have a lot of fun trying to complete a collection of all the Wolverine appearances, or start with an even newer character such as Nexus.

And don't forget that no matter what character you choose to specialize in, there will always be tough issues to find. For example, I know several people who are crazy about Michael T.Gilbert's new Eclipse comic, **Mr.Monster**.

After they got the four or five issues from Eclipse, they discovered that the first appearance of Mr. Monster was in a little known Pacific Comic called **Vanguard**. Little did they know, however, that the very first appearance of Mr. Monster *anywhere* was in an obscure Canadian comic book from the 1940s! Not even Gilbert, the creator of the new Mr. Monster, has a complete copy of this scarce comic. So even if you choose an "easy" character to collect, there are hidden challenges.

If you specialize in a character, by all means try to get some original art or a sketch by an artist of the character. Green Lantern was always my favorite DC Silver Age hero, and my collection was complete when I had Gil Kane, the original artist from the 1960s, do an ink drawing for me of the Emerald Crusader.

And don't forget that a character is more than just a comic book character. Spider-Man has appeared in newspaper strips, gum cards and paperback books. There's a whole other area of collecting toys that feature the character, such as Bat-Mobile model cars and Incredible Hulk dolls.

At the last convention I attended, a Spider-Man collector's life was complete because he had just found an early 1970s record album that featured his favorite Web Slinger.

Just don't go overboard on this, however. A Wonder Woman fan that I promised not to name always buys his wife Wonder Woman "Under-Roos" instead of sexy lingerie. He says it's only for his collection, but his wife's smile tells me otherwise.

Finally, one last thought on collecting by character. Don't limit yourself to only super-heroes! If nothing else, choose a super-villain you especially admire or loathe. Although I long ago gave up on a complete **Batman** collection, I'm still holding out for a complete **Joker** collection.

What's the comic market going to do this year? Are prices going to rise as fast as last year?

No one can answer that type of question, but I can give you some hints on how you can predict how strong the comic book market will be from year to year.

The answer, in one word: INFLATION.

The price of *all* collectibles, be they stamps, coins, baseball cards or fine art masterpieces are strongly tied to the inflation rate.

The biggest jumps in back issues comic book prices occurred from the years 1972 to 1978. Since 1979, prices, on the average, have only risen at about 20 to 50 percent of the rate of those earlier years.

This corresponds pretty closely with the inflation rates for those years. Inflation was high from the mid to late 1970s, and has leveled off and dramatically decreased since 1980.

Collectibles, and comic books, do well during times of inflation because people are looking for tangible items to invest their money in. When inflation is low, people tend to invest in other areas instead of collectibles because they get a better return on their money.

As an example, the prices for fine old art masterpieces in the medium price range are now only *half* of what they were five to ten years ago.

Back issue comic book prices, which used to jump 25 to 35 percent each year, now move up 10 to 20 percent or even not at all. For the last few years with the low inflation rate, many titles have not increased in price to any significant amount.

Of course the price of *everything*, be it food, clothing or old comic books, goes up with inflation. The rate of increase in back issues prices for old comics, however, usually runs about two to three times the national inflation rate.

Thus, over the last few years, with an inflation rate of around 5 percent, comic prices have increased 10 percent or so. In the earlier years when inflation was at 12 to 15 percent, back issue prices jumped 25 to 45 percent.

National economics and politics *do* affect the price you pay for a back issue comic. This is especially true for the high-dollar Golden Age books which are perceived as more of an investment item than the more recent "hot" titles which usually just reflect fickle collector interest.

How will the comic book market do next year? Look at the inflation rate for a preview.

ARE YOU SLEEPING, ARE YOU SLEEPING? Department: In every collectible field, there are items called "sleepers."

A sleeper is a truly collectible item whose real value has not yet been realized by collectors. As soon as collectors "wake up" and realize the value of a sleeper, its price skyrockets.

Some classic examples of "sleeper" comics in the past were the early D.C. comics with Legion of Super Heroes appearances. For a long time, these books were priced the same as other books from the same time period.

Then one year, collectors woke up and all the Legion books doubled and tripled in price.

Usually a comic book that is a sleeper has a built-in collectibility that has not yet been fully realized by speculators and investors.

Right now, there are probably several hundred "sleepers" from the past ten years. In future columns, I'll point some of these out to you and tell you how to recognize if a comic is a sleeper or just dead on arrival.

And speaking of dead, I came across a sleeper at a small local comic show over the weekend. **Adventure Comics 462** featured the "Death of the Earth-II Batman." It was a dollar-sized giant DC comic that now has the current guide or retail value of about 90 cents—less than the original cover price.

All death issues are collectible, and this one especially so. I realized how relatively hard to find this particular issue was when a long-time DC collector told me he had been looking for that comic for over a year at conventions and comic book stores around the state.

At the time **Adventure 462** appeared, the sales for this title were low—very low! It was one of the poorest-selling DC titles, and the dollar price tag kept a lot of collectors and speculators away from the book.

Now you're not going to get rich by buying up copies of this book. It probably will only be worth two to three times what the surrounding issues of **Adventure** are worth, or about $2 or $3.

Still, if you're a DC collector, and especially if you're a Batman collector (and there are certainly more of them nowadays), then pick up this sleeper before everybody else wakes up.

CF

MIKE BENTON IS THE AUTHOR OF COMICS COLLECTING FOR FUN AND PROFIT PUBLISHED BY [illegible]. HE IS CONSIDERED AN AUTHORITY ON THE INVESTMENT VALUE OF COMIC BOOKS.

HEROES

BY JAMES VAN HISE
SPECIAL THANKS TO CHRIS WOGEE

When the early days of the Silver Age of Comics are discussed, Flash, Green Lantern and the Justice League of America are recalled. But there is another super-group that appeared during the late Fifties which is often overlooked because it didn't achieve prominence until later.

Adventure 247 (April 1958) features "The Legion Of Super-Heroes" as its cover story. This tale introduces the concept in a story written by Otto Binder (well known for the classic Adam Link robot stories he wrote for the pulps with his brother, Earl) and drawn by Al Plastino. The story opens with a freaky Friday approach in that Clark Kent is addressed as Superboy by someone, and then when he appears as Superboy, two more people refer to his Clark Kent identity. They soon reveal the joke — that they are from the future and have come back to invite Superboy to join their organization. He returns with them to a time a thousand years from now and, after some initiation tricks, he's inducted. The only three Legionaires we meet are Saturn Girl, Cosmic Boy and Lightning Boy (later called Lightning Lad). While in later stories the Legionaires appear to be in their late teens at least, in this first tale, they seem to be about 15 at most.

The Legion's second appearance, in **Adventure** 267 (December 1959), is just a gimmick. Their futurescope seems to record Superboy performing criminal acts which are then explained as a top secret presidential mission to destroy implements used in a poison gas experiment.

The third Legion appearance is in **Action** 267 (August 1960), which features Lightning Lad, Saturn Girl and Cosmic Boy meeting Supergirl during the time when she was still Superman's "secret weapon." Written by Jerry Siegel, this story made a reference which was ignored in later continuity due to the massive confusion it would have caused. When Supergirl remarks that Superman had described meeting the three Legionaires when he was Superboy, Saturn Girl states, "We are the children of the three young super heroes who befriended Superboy! We are carrying on the Legion's traditions..." When she accompanies them back to the future, Supergirl misses her chance to join the Legion because exposure to red kryptonite makes her appear to be an adult who is older than their 18 years age limit.

The fourth appearance of the Legion once more featured only Saturn Girl, Lightning Lad and Cosmic Boy. In "The Army of Living Kryptonite Men!" a typical Superboy versus Luthor story is given a twist ending in which the Legion spies Superboy in peril on their time-viewer and Lightning Lad rushes back to save him. Since one isn't supposed to be able to alter history, Superboy realizes after he escapes that fate would have acted to preserve him anyway.

New Legionaires were introduced as background characters in **Action** 267. These first new heroes are Chameleon Boy, Colossal Boy and Invisible Kid.

In **Adventure** 282 ("Lana and the Legion of Super-Heroes"), we meet another new Legionaire, Star Boy who returns to our time to capture two escaped criminals. Lana tricks Star Boy into helping her try to make Superboy jealous. A minor story.

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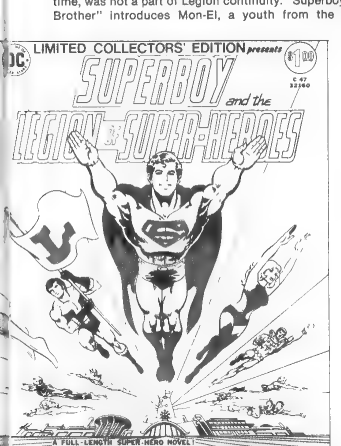
In **Action** 267 (May 1961, "Supergirl's Three Super Girl-Friends"), we not only meet Saturn Girl again, but also Phantom Girl and Triplicate Girl, the latter two for the first time. They want Supergirl to try out for the Legion again so she competes against Shrinking Violet, Bouncing Boy and Sun Boy. We also meet Braniac 5, the descendant of Superman's old foe Brainiac. Supergirl and Brainiac 5 are accepted into the Legion. At first she is suspicious and fearful of Brainiac 5, but he wins her confidence. She cuts her visit to the future short, feeling that she must return to her own time to be Superman's secret weapon. It was common in these old stories to treat timelines as being parallel so that hours spent in the future corresponded

THE LEGION OF SUPERHEROES (Part One)

with hours gone from the past. Actually she could stay in the future for months and then return to the past at the very moment she left!

Superboy 89 (June 1961) contains a story which, at the time, was not a part of Legion continuity. "Superboy's Big Brother" introduces Mon-El, a youth from the planet



Daxam who visited Krypton weeks before it exploded. At first, due to Mon-El's amnesia after his rocket crash lands, Superboy believes that Mon-El may be his older brother. Later Mon-El remembers the truth after Superboy exposes him to lead, not knowing that it is Mon-El's fatal weakness. Since the fatal effects cannot be reversed, Superboy projects Mon-el into the Phantom Zone until a cure can be found. That cure will not be discovered for a thousand years. Only then will the Legion free him from the zone, cure him and induct him into their roster.

In **Superboy** 86, the youthful Luthor, after encountering Lightning Lad of the Legion of Super-Heroes, suspects that there must be a Legion of Super-Villains as well and vows to find them. In **Superman** 147 (August 1961), the adult Luthor finally encounters them in "The Legion of Super-Villains!" Luthor creates a device to send a plea into the future for any Legion of Super-Villains to rescue him. They hear his message and comply. A spaceship picks up Luthor in which he encounters Cosmic King, Lightning Lord (brother of Lightning Man — formerly Lightning Lad) and Saturn Queen. Superman is lured to another world and trapped in a Kryptonite force field. When the adult Legion arrives, Saturn Woman offers to trade herself and die in Superman's place. Through clever deduction, Superman figures out how to get Saturn Queen to turn on her fellow villains and rescue them all. Luthor is again imprisoned and this time when he contacts the future again, Lightning Lord tells him not to bother asking for help because the villains are in prison too!

The Legion's next appearance in **Adventure** 290 (Nov. 1961, "The Secret of the Seventh Super-Hero!") seemingly represents Sun Boy (glimpsed first in **Action** 267). It turns out that this is a Sun Boy imposter who is trying to destroy Superboy, but Superboy outwits him because the imposter doesn't know the secret Legion handshake!

The Legion has a cameo in **Superman** 149 ("The Death of Superman"), but this is just one of DC's "imaginary" stories, so it's not really a part of the Legion canon. If it were, we'd wonder why they wouldn't have just warned Superboy during his first trip into the future, of what history recorded would happen.

Chameleon Boy makes a minor appearance in **Superboy** 93 (Nov. 1961, "Lana Lang's Superboy Identity Detection Kit") when he gets Clark's fat out of the fire in just the way you'd think he must.

Superman Annual 4 (1961) has a special feature on the "Origins and Powers of the Legion of Super-Heroes," although it inexplicably places them in the 21st century. It was the first sign that interest in the Legion was growing as they were considered to be important enough to spotlight in an annual. In the early Sixties, annuals were considered to be special events, even if they were mostly reprints. The Legion feature was one of the rare bits of original material done for an early Superman annual.

Action 285 (Feb. 1962, "The World's Greatest Heroine") features a Legion cameo, while **Adventure** 293 (Feb. 1962, "The Legion of Super-Traitors") offers a Saturn Girl, Lightning Lad and Cosmic Boy controlled by aliens who want to conquer Earth and destroy Superboy.

The Legion of Super-Villains shows up in **Action** 286 ("The Jury of Super Enemies") and then the Legion appears in **Action** 287 (April 1962, "Supergirl's Greatest Challenge"). This is an actual Legion adventure set in the future. Supergirl saves the galaxy from one menace and then rescues the

a gallery of classic legion covers!

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Legion from alien shape-changers before returning to her own time.

The Legion plays a part in **Superman** 152, "The Robot Master," and in **Action** 289 (June 1962, "Superman's Space - Courtship").

Ultra Boy is introduced in **Superboy** 98 (July 1962, "The Boy With Ultra-Powers!") and the Legion continues making appearances, such as the one in **Superman** 156 (October 1962, "The Last Days of Superman").

TALES OF THE LEGION OF SUPERHEROES

"Though the world of the distant future abounds with many Marvelous inventions which make life happier for the peoples of many planets, counter-balancing this are the fantastic perils! The dynamic Legion of Super-Heroes was formed to combat these incredible threats, for each Legion member possesses at least one amazing super power!" So begins the first regular Legion adventure in their firs regular series in **Adventure** 300 (June 1962). That story, "The Face Behind The Lead Mask" (story by Jerry Siegel, of Super-Man fame, and art by John Forte) deals with a mysterious masked menace who has a device which causes the powers of the Legion members to act uncontrollably. When Superboy is summoned from the past to help them, the masked menace displays his kryptonite vision. Calling himself Urthlo, he is revealed to be a Luthor robot sent into the 30th century by Lex Luthor. He is defeated when the Legion releases Mon-El from the Phantom Zone and temporarily cures his lead poisoning. They then return Mon-El to the Zone until a permanent cure can be found.

Adventure 301 features "The Secret Origin of Bouncing Boy". He used his silly, and not incredibly useful, bouncing power to join the Legion. Like the Elongated Man who drank an elixer to stretch, Bouncing Boy accidentally drank a secret formula which gave him bouncing powers.

In "The End of Sun Boy" (**Adventure** 302), Sun Boy loses his powers but manages to regain them by exposing himself to a Flame Beast since its powers are of an organic

origin. When Superboy and Ultra Boy attempt to use their heat visions to return his powers it failed because it turned out that they were robots sent to stand in for the two Legionaires who were in the past. Once again, the future is treated as though it runs concurrently with the past.

"The Stolen Super Powers" (**Adventure** 304) seems like just another gimmick story as Saturn Girl concocts a scheme to steal the powers of the other Legion members while they think she is under alien influence. Actually she has learned from aliens that a legionnaire will die, and has made the decision that it will be herself. But Lightning Lad has also learned the truth, and sacrifices himself. The last panel asks readers whether 30th century science will one day restore his life. Careful readers know it must because **Superman** 147 had already featured a story in which an adult Lightning Man appears!

The death of Lightning Lad created a recurring undercurrent in Legion stories: "The Secret of the Mystery Legionnaire" (issue 305), "The Return of Lightning Lad" (issue 308), and "The Super-Sacrifice of the Legionnaires" (from **Adventure** 312). These stories comprise the tale of the death and resurrection of Lightning Lad. They were reprinted in **Adventure** 403 (March 1971).

The origin of Lightning Lad is described (in issue 308) as involving a twin sister. Both were exposed to the bolts of lightning beasts and thereby gained lightning powers. But two years earlier in **Superman** 147, Lightning Lord, who is supposed to be Lightning Lad's evil brother, explains a different origin. He tells of a lightning beast attacking the two of them, with no sister involved! But in **Adventure** 308 there is a sister, and she's inducted into the Legion as Lightning Lass.

In issue 312, Lightning Lad is revived when the Legionnaires have a bolt of lightning on a lightning world strike one of them and transfer the life energy to Lightning Lad's comatose form. The Legionnaire who makes the sacrifice turns out to be Chameleon Boy's alien shape-changing pet, Proty.

The Legion of Super Outlaws!" appears in **Adventure** 324 (Sept. '64), only they're not really outlaws, just super-guys

THE ORIGINAL LINEUP OF THE LEGION

In 1961, this was the lineup of the Legion of Super-Heroes (excluding Superboy and Supergirl):

LIGHTNING LAD— Gained mastery of lightning when a blast from a lightning monster on the planet Korbal electrified his body. Conflicting accounts have included a brother who was with him when this happened, as well as a sister (Lightning Lass—See **Adventure** 308).

SATURN GIRL—She comes from Saturn where everyone possesses the power of telepathy.

COSMIC BOY— Possesses the power of super-magnetism which he inherited from his parents who migrated from the planet Braal. Evolution has given Braalians the power to magnetically battle the metal monsters that roam that world.

PHANTOM GIRL — Came to Earth from the planet Bgztl, of the 4th dimension, which co-exists, unseen, in the same space Earth occupies.

TRIPLICATE GIRL— Comes from the planet Cargg where a triple sun imbued all inhabitants with the power of splitting into three bodies. When one of her "duplicates" was slain by Computo, she became Duo Damsel.

BRAINIAC 5 — The great-geat-great-great grandson of the space villain who was one of Superman's foulest foes. (At the time Brainiac 5 was created circa 1960, it had not yet been revealed that the original Brainiac was a robot. How does a robot have humanoid grandchildren? Only the Legion knows!)

BOUNCING BOY — Gained the power of super-bouncing when he drank a scientist's experimental elixer. (In **Adventure 301** it was revealed how someone with such a silly power managed to be accepted into the Legion after his application was bounced the first time.)

INVISIBLE KID — A young genius who invented a serum which enables him to become invisible, thus using his "power" to spy on criminals.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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led astray by a scientist with a grudge against the legion.

"Lex Luthor Meets The Super-Hero Legion!" takes place in issue 325. Disguising himself as he appeared before losing his hair and becoming a villain, he journies into the future and takes on the Legion. He loses, of course.

"The Lone Wolf Legionnaire!" (**Adventure** 327) is a super-powered youth who believes himself to be an android and therefore not good enough to associate with real humans. What could be an interesting story is marred when it's revealed that he really is human. He is just the victim of a hoax perpetrated by a real android. Comic fans would have to wait a few years for the Vision to be introduced into the Avengers before seeing a real android treated as an equal by human beings.

Lightning Lad always seems to be singled out for bad luck. First he dies and is revived, and then in **Adventure** 333 he loses his right arm. It is replaced by a metal one.

"The Civil War of the Legion!" (issue 333, June 1965) was written by science fiction writer Edmond Hamilton (who wrote a number of Legion stories), and is one of their more

SHRINKING VIOLET — Inherited her super-shrinking powers from her parents who came from the planet Imsk.

CHAMELEON BOY — Inherited his power of shape-changing from his parents, natives of the planet Durla. (His father was later revealed.)

COLOSSAL BOY — Has the power of super-growth gained from the radiation effect of a meteor from distant space.

SUN BOY — Became accidentally locked inside an atomic reactor chamber. The atomic bombardment transformed him into a human beacon of blazing light and heat.

Note: Both Superboy and Supergirl belong to the Legion simultaneously. Due to a post-hypnotic suggestion implanted in Superboy's mind, he loses all memories of Supergirl when he returns to his own time. Due to the massive revisions in the Superman continuity presently being made by John Byrne at D.C., there will *never* have been a Superboy. Thus his adventures in the Legion will never have taken place!

complicated tales. It deals with a lost Kryptonian colony on Earth and how the Legion actually helps them to get there by going back in time. It also tells that the Atlanteans found an element in the Earth's atmosphere poisonous and had to alter their evolution in order to become aquatic. Along the way, the Legion takes sides and splits supporting Kryptonians or Atlantians as they wage war against one another.

Adventure 335 features the Legion against their mysterious Starfinger (the James Bond craze was at its peak in 1965, but as usual, comics didn't pick up on this until it had been raging for about a year). This is also the first continued story and concludes in 336 when Starfinger is revealed to be Lightning Lad under the hypnotic spell of a scientist. The Legionnaire was lured into a trap by promises of a way to replace his mechanical arm with a real one.

Issues 340 & 341 form another two part adventure introducing the super computer menace, Computo (who is not unlike Ultron 5 and friends who would begin appearing in The Avengers a few years later). In this story a Legionnaire actually dies when one of Triplicate Girl's bodies is destroyed by Computo. She then becomes Duo Damsel now only able to make one duplicate of herself. Another story opportunity is missed when nothing much is made of this event. Interesting concepts could have been explored such as which one of her forms is the duplicate and which the original? What is her duplicate really, and since it comes out of her, what other effects does losing part of herself have? But all of this is overlooked.

A number of artists worked on the Legion in these early days, including such talents as Curt Swan, John Forte, Jim Mooney, George Klein and Al Plastino. The writers were usually Otto Binder, Jerry Siegel and Edmond Hamilton. But in **Adventure 346** (July 1966), a new writer would begin scripting the Legion — a 13 year old boy by the name of Jim Shooter, the same Jim Shooter who is now the editor-in-chief of Marvel Comics. But his influence will be examined in the next issue. CF

JAMES VAN HISE IS THE FORMER EDITOR/PUBLISHER OF ONE OF THE OLDEST PUBLICATIONS ABOUT COMIC BOOKS, THE RBCC. FOUNDED IN THE EARLY '60S, AND HAS CONTRIBUTED SOMETHING TO VIRTUALLY EVERY MAJOR PUBLICATION SINCE. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF THE ART OF AL WILLIAMSON.

Games

BY STEVE PERRIN

This column is normally for those **COMICS FEATURE** readers who have either heard about role playing games (or board games) and wonder what they are all about or play the games and want to find out about what relates to comic books.

To meet both of these needs, I swing back and forth between reviews and various aspects of gaming. The latter can either be introductory or advanced, depending on the material discussed.

Recently we have been concentrating on reviews so it's past time we talked about game playing.

But, before we do, what do you, the reader, want to see in the future? Write to me care of Our Esteemed Editor and express your opinion. Do you want more reviews? More tips on playing or game mastering? An (ahem) entire magazine devoted to games? Mini-modules for your favorite games? A reader's poll of favorite games among the **COMICS FEATURE** audience? Let me know. I do requests.

Write to: Steve Perrin — Games
Comics Feature
8399 Topanga Canyon Blvd., Suite 210
Canoga Park, CA 91304

Ol' Happy Hal will be glad to forward your letters on to me—along with my paycheck. Right Hal?

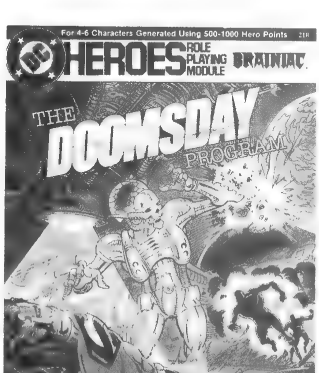
PLAYING NOTES

Role playing is an amazing experience when you are with people who can really suspend their disbelief and get into the mood of the adventure. There have been times when I was convinced I really was walking down a dark corridor—every sense alert for the first motion of an enemy ahead or behind.

This itself evokes a sense of quasi-reality. You Are There. This Could Happen To You. But what does this have to do with reality? Could it happen to you? What do you do with someone who says, "But this could never happen?"

I am not talking about a player who cannot believe the basic premises of the game. One rarely finds a player who says, "Dragons are not possible, so we couldn't be attacked by one." Anyone who plays a fantasy role playing game, such as **Dungeons and Dragons** or my own **RuneQuest**, has already made the cognitive jump that allows him or her to a accept that dragons are possible in the game they are playing.

However, some players take great delight in bringing "reality" into the middle of a fantasy game by interjecting physics or chemistry into a scenario that doesn't call for it. "We can't go on fighting the dragon," they'll say, "Because his firey breath has already used up all the possible oxygen in this underground chamber."


For 4-6 Characters Generated Using 500-1000 Hero Points 21st
DC HEROES ROLE PLAYING MODULE
BRAINIAC
THE DOOMSDAY PROGRAM
By Mark Acres
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What these people are doing, in the main, is having fun by showing off their **extra** knowledge without considering the effect they are having on the fun of the rest of the players. Even if the rest of the players hoot down the dissenter and go on to destroy the dragon, they have a residual feeling that maybe they have cheated; maybe they didn't deserve to live because the laws of physics say their characters should be dead. Even more of a problem is the Gamemaster who says, "Yeah, he's right," and starts killing off parties by suffocation from dragon breath.

I am using fantasy games as an example here, but the type of player and problem show up in science fiction games — where the junior physicist often has a real advantage over his less-educated companions—superhero games, and any other role playing games.

Sometimes, of course, a group of these technocrats find each other, and they are happier than a hacker on a keyboard. Each gets to one-up the technical expertise of the other, and all have a great time. Usually this results in a

AN EXPLANATION

complete re-write of the game they are playing so that it will reflect the "real" world. Interestingly enough, whenever such an effort actually gets published, there are a bunch of knowier-than-thou types ready to take them to task for the technical errors in the new game.

You see, the other interesting facet of the technocrats is that they have certain areas of specialization (our example above is obviously of an oxygen deprivation maven). Whenever they have to write rules or describe situations outside their areas of specialization, they generally make up something that sounds right.

The best example of all this that I have is my own game, **RuneQuest**. I wrote the combat system and general game system of **RuneQuest** because I'm a charter member of the Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc., and I was disgusted with the unrealistic combat system in **Dungeons and Dragons**.I still am. I played **D&D** recently (for the first time in six years) and went home trying to come up with a more rational combat system for it. I then realized that I was repeating the same sequence I went through when I wrote **RuneQuest**.

I had a number of co-authors on **RuneQuest** who helped flesh out such things as the magic and social systems, but most of them were also SCA members. Only my principal co-author, Ray Turney, had no affiliation with the SCA, and he was willing to bow to our general expertise in the field.

In any case, I think that **RuneQuest** has less flaws than most of its competition (partly because of the great numbers of people who contributed to its current incarnation), but it still suffers from errors—most of which result from the authors' (yes, all of them) general dislike for expanding number sequences out to their limits and seeing what happens. None of us thought in terms of what happens if a character plays to maximize every facet of the rules, because we don't play that way. It was rather a shock to all of us to run into the players that do maximize everything. That's one reason that **RuneQuest** is in its third edition. It's also a reason that some of the more reasonable players dislike the third edition, because the rules we made to limit the maximizers sometimes interfere with legitimate play of reasonable characters. Oh well.

Similarly, Steve Jackson designed a small boardgame called **Ogre**, which pits a mammoth cybernetic tank against a collection of tanks, ground-effect vehicles (called GEVs), howitzers, missile tanks, etc.. After months of testplaying, he was sure that he had balanced the game out sufficiently, that each side had a reasonable chance of victory, depending on the tactics used and the luck of the dice.

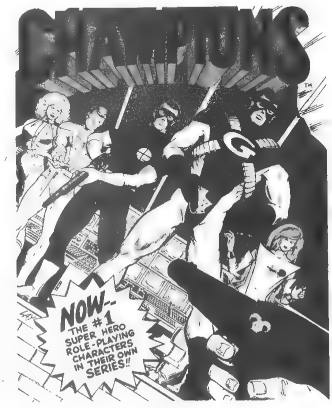
Unfortunately, there was one possible defense that no one testplayed because no one believed it would work. However, once it got on the stands, several canny players discovered that a defense entirely of GEVs would bring the Ogre to a halt every time.

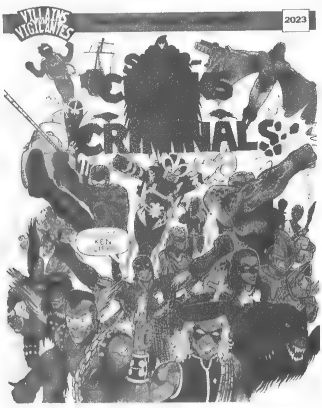
For those of you who want to buy the game and astonish your friends with your wonderful defense, be warned that you will have to pick up an original edition of the game. All further editions have changed the GEV rules to bring the balance back. Since the game has been out longer than **RuneQuest**, and the original publisher is now out of business (it's now published by, sonuvagun, Steve Jackson Games), you'll need all the luck in the world to find an original copy.

GETTING BACK TO FANTASY

So what can one do about the technocrat in the usual gameplaying environment?

The first thing for a Game Master confronted with such a player to do is to define his genre—first to himself, then to his players. A technocrat in the middle of a hard-science science fiction game is not a bad thing. If the Game Master





wants to have the feeling of hard physical reality in the game, the technocrat is a resource. Just check everything out with him ahead of time, and sit on him if he disrupts the game to make a scientific point about the play.

However, if the genre being duplicated is fantasy, or superheroes or gothic horror, then the Game Master has to make clear to all his players that sometimes physics have to take a back seat to the genre.

For instance, has anyone out there ever read a fantasy novel in which the heroes collapse from suffocation because the dragon's breath has used up all the oxygen? Or even collapsed because of the effect of metal armor on a hard-working body in an enclosed space—something I have personally experienced. The last person to use that gimmick was Sir Walter Scott, in *Ivanhoe*. I don't think an author has used this collapsed-from-overexertion bit since.

Yes, it is perfectly valid, but it doesn't fit the *genre*. Robert E. Howard, author of Conan, King Kull, Kane, etc. undoubtedly read Scott, just as he read all the other great adventure writers before he started his own career. He obviously chose to ignore the concept of stuffy armor as unheroic. All the writers who followed Howard in the same *genre*, even those who probably did not read him, such as Tolkien, made the same decision. Armor does not suffocate. Therefore, it shouldn't do so in fantasy games.

Superhero comics more or less throw the laws of physics out with the first panels. A close attention to the laws of physics will turn a superhero game into a secret agent game in no time at all.

However, comics have their own reality, and that has to be followed. Where the laws of physics go by the wayside, the social and cultural mores of the superhero world have to be followed. Heroes do not kill villains. So-called "killer" heroes, such as Wolverine, have to be convinced that if they are going to operate as heroes, they have to follow the rules. This is true in the comics, and must be enforced in the games.

This doesn't mean that players cannot play killer characters, but they have to be ready to have their character convinced not to kill anyone. The name of the game, after all, is role playing. If a player wants to role play a killer hero in a comic book environment, he has to be ready to fulfill his "role" in the usual storyline.

GAMES INTO BOOKS

Now that we have discussed the methods of translating books into games, let's take a brief look at the attempt to reverse the process. I mentioned the new **Champions** comic book briefly before. Now we know more about it. By the time you read this, the second issue should be on the stands. However, due to the magic of publishing, as I write this in April, I haven't seen the first issue yet.

For now, it looks like an interesting package. The original concept from Dennis Mallonee had been for a six-issue mini-series anthology featuring rotating stories of four heroes (something like the format of **First Adventures**, but with more one or two issue stories). The heroes were Icestar (a happy-go-lucky "normal" superhero who fought supervillains), Marksman (a somewhat grimmer weaponeer who fights racketeers, thugs, etc.), Rose (a mystically oriented teleporter who fights arcane menaces) and Giant (a superhero of the 1930s).

After discussing the project with Eclipse Comics, Dennis changed the plan into a super-team book featuring the Guardians — the superteam used as examples in many of the **Champions** game books. In fact, the members of the Guardians include Icestar, Marksman, Rose and Giant (modern day successor to the 1930s original), along with several other heroes. One of these others, the flaming energy projector, Flare, was added to the cast to make up the team.

Dennis also used his own favorite villain organization, Demon, as the main villains for the series. These demonic gangsters were described in Hero Games' **Organization Book II: PRIMUS and Demon**, which I reviewed in a previous column. Anyone wanting a little advance information should check out that excellent supplement to the **Champions** world. Not too surprisingly, Dennis was one of the contributors to the Organization Book.

The comic book is going to have several tie-ins to the game, including game descriptions of the characters depicted and fan-submitted Danger Room designs. The intent is to appeal to both the gamer and comics reader. It will be fascinating to see just how much of an overlap there is.

THE INEVITABLE REVIEWS

Super-Crooks and Criminals is the latest offering from Fantasy Games Unlimited for **Villains and Vigilantes**. Like most of their recent efforts, this was done by Canadian Ken Cliffe, his country of origin perhaps explaining such characters as Quebecois and Fluer de Lis.

Super-Crooks and Criminals is a compendium of badguys to be slotted into any **V&V** campaign to liven up the situation. By using the previously published **Champions** and **Superworld** conversions, the book becomes even more useful.

The range of villains is wide, with relative wimps like Kill-Bird all the way up to the Four Riders of the Apocalypse. FGU also reprinted **half** of my article on how to translate **V&V** to **Superworld**.

CRISIS CROSSUP

Did anyone out there notice the demise of the "Bug-Eyed Bandit" in **Crisis on Infinite Earths**. The obliteration plants Mayfair Games' new **DC Heroes** module, **The Doomsday Program** into pre-Crisis time, because the Bandit plays a definite part in Brainiac's master plan.

Aside from this probably unavoidable slip, this Teen Titans oriented supplement is a masterful collection of red herrings and other snares for the unwary. I intend to use it as an Infinity, Inc. scenario shortly. The plot is easy to follow (for the Game Master), the menaces are convincingly nasty and there are mysteries galore for the poor bewildered players. Who has kidnapped Superman? Why are high-ranking people going amnesiac? Why has the amnesiac Bug Eyed Bandit turned again to crime? If he has become a criminal, why is he still showing up for work at the Omega Corporation? And if this is a plot by the Bug Eyed Bandit, why is Brainiac on the cover of the supplement? It's a good adventure. Buy it.

CF

WHERE TO INQUIRE

Hex and **Doomsday Program**—Mayfair Games, P.O. Box 48539, Niles IL 60648.

Super-Crooks and Criminals—Fantasy Games Unlimited, Inc., P.O. Box 182, Roslyn, NY 11576.

Champions Comic Book—Eclipse Comics, P.O. Box 199, Guerneville, CA 95446.

STEVE PERRIN IS THE CREATOR OF BOTH THE SUPERWORLD AND ELFQUEST GAMES AS WELL AS A SCORE OF MODULES AND OTHER ITEMS.

MUTANTS & THUNDERGODS

BY JAMES VAN HISE

Walt and Louise Simonson create comics for Marvel in a family way. The husband and wife creative team account for three monthly titles (**Thor**, **X-Factor** and **Power Pack**) as well as several forthcoming projects. Walt has been both writing and drawing **Thor** since issue 337, but he recently relinquished the art chores to Sal Buscema. Now he just writes it. But his drawing hand won't get much of a rest as he is immediately picking up **X-Factor** (to be inked by Bob Wiacek), which his wife, Louise (formerly Louise Jones) is writing. Louise is the creator and writer of **Power Pack** and edited the mutant books (**X-Men** and company) for several years. A combination of past accomplishments enabled her to emerge as the new writer on **X-Factor** after creative differences caused a shake-up for editorial and writing staff. The book has been plagued by controversy and Marvel is looking for changes.

"It looked at one point as if Bob Layton was not going to make a deadline so they asked me to do a fill-in issue and I turned in a plot," Louise explains. "But it got shelved. Later there were deadline problems and other pressures while I was working on a story for the X-Factor annual. It later turned out that they were going to have Layton do the annual, they asked me to take over the regular series. Chris Claremont had recommended me for it!"

Since Louise wasn't part of the original team that conceived and launched **X-Factor**, her ideas are different than those of first writer, Bob Layton.

"I'm taking the book in a different direction than he would have, but I'm taking it in a direction that's based on what's gone before," Louise states. "There's a problem with X-Factor putting out anti-mutant ads which heighten anti-mutant hysteria, which is supposed to be what X-Factor is trying to stop! That's a problem but eventually we'll find out why X-Factor ran these crazy ads. It will take some time. In a way it will just be an elaboration of the original concept.

"I'm also going to be dealing with Warren Worthington being a public figure who's connected to X-Factor. I feel that Bob Layton would have dealt with all of this, but probably in a different way. My editor, Bob Harras, has no objections to the things I want to do and actually thinks it is a good idea. X-Factor may go off in ways that the original conceivers hadn't imagined, but maybe it won't."

THE JEAN GREY FACTOR

A lot of excitement built up around the launching of X-Factor, particularly over the return of Jean Grey from the "dead" and the triangle with Cyclops and his wife, Madelyne. But fans eagerly expecting to see what would happen when Jean and Madelyne met were disappointed. Six issues later, they were still waiting to see that come to pass. It seems that Scott Summers has become a moral coward who can't bring himself to tell the truth to either his wife or Jean.

"I think that dragged on longer than necessary," Louise agrees, "although it's possible that Bob Layton might have his reasons. Once Jean finds out that Scott is married, even though on some levels she understands why he married, she resents no one telling her. Scott felt that he'd already lost Madelyne and feared that if he told Jean that he'd lose her, too. That's Scott's motivation as far as I can see. Jean understands all that, but she isn't going to want to have too much to do with him. Even though she loves him, she doesn't want to have an affair with a married man. It drives a wedge between them, but there'll be other factors as well. It's a triangle that's going to

X-FACTOR AND THOR

WALT AND LOUISE SIMONSON FORGE NEW DIRECTIONS!

A SIMONSON GAL

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turn into a quadrangle."

Whatever the final resolution of the Scott Summers/JeanGrey/Madelyn Summers conflict may be, Louise will not pursue it completely until after Chris Claremont has played out an **X-Men** subplot he has in the works for Madelyne. Louise feels that there has already been too much in **X-Factor** that interferes with the continuity that Chris Claremont has been working on for ten years.

"Madelyne is his character," Louise points out. "I won't do anything with her until Chris is ready. He's got a whole string of things planned for her in **X-Men**. It seems to me that things were done without his approval at the beginning, and it wasn't fair." Louise refers to the resurrection of Jean Grey, a character whom it was believed had committed suicide due to the uncontrolled destruction she was responsible for as Dark Phoenix. Claremont intended that she remain dead. When Layton and others conceived a way for Jean to return, events proceeded with the force of a steamroller. Not only wasn't her return tied in with the **X-Men**, but the X-Men don't even know that she's alive.

"There were a lot of reasons why those things were done," Louise continues, "and Chris understands. Chris is a professional. But no one wants things done to their characters without

LERY OF HEROES!

their permission. Enough has been done to his continuity, he should be allowed to do what he wants for awhile. When he's finished with Madelyne, then we'll do something with her."

SIXTIES MARVEL MEETS EIGHTIES MARVEL

While Chris Claremont is planning sweeping changes in the **X-Men**, Louise plans to shake up **X-Factor**. "But along different lines from what Chris is doing. None of the members of X-Factor are being replaced. They're going to be the same members except that one of them is going away for awhile and will come back different," she reveals, hinting at the future.

Walt Simonson verbalized the theory behind much of what their outlook is on **X-Factor**.

"The theory behind it is simply that the original X-Men, with a couple of exceptions, are heroes from the early Sixties who are pretty much unchanged. This means that they're running around in a Marvel universe which is filled with guys such as the Marauder and the various villains the new X-Men and others have fought. Our feeling," states Walt, "is that X-Factor is not really equipped to deal with it. The fact that one of the X-Factor can jump 14 feet into the air from standing still isn't really a tremendously powerful asset in

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a major fight. The fact that one of them can fly is not really a major asset. We plan a little corrective surgery on several of the characters in order to bring them up to what we think are appropriate levels for superheroes in the middle 1980s."

"We're going to do something with Ice Man that Walt came up with," adds Louise, cryptically.

Although one might think that the defeat of Cyclops by the non-powered Storm in **X-Men** could be viewed as the Sixties meets the Eighties, that isn't what Louise had in mind.

"I disagree with that because I think that Cyke, as bummed out as he was, would have whipped Storm's ass! Chris doesn't think so, obviously, and that's how he wrote it. But Cyclops is very, very powerful. Maybe his power hasn't been used well. We are revamping him psychologically. He will become more of a tortured soul than he was before. I think he may actually go a little mad eventually, and then maybe we'll save him—or maybe not...He's caught right now in a classic double-bind situation where he's done something he can't abide, and he wants something he can't have, and it's tearing him apart. We're going to see the dissolution of Cyclops. Although his power is not going to be augmented in any way, his psychological state will be a factor in how he uses his power."

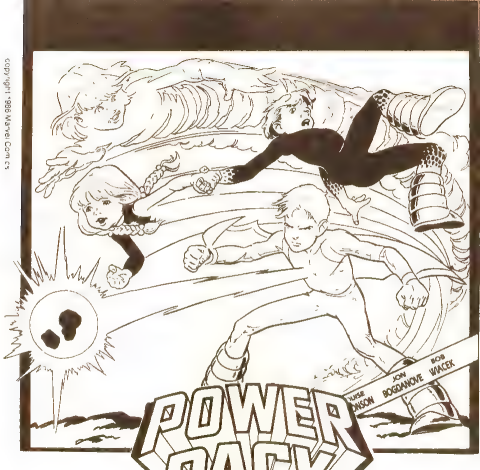
The **X-Men/X-Factor** crossover with Chris Claremont discussed in our annual mutants roundup in the June **COMICS FEATURE** has already begun in the issues of **X-Factor** which Louise is writing.

"We're crossing over a good bit of continuity right now and the X-Factor actually appear in an issue of **X-Men**. I think 211, and the same scene with Magneto appears in **X-Factor** 9. We have a fight in the Morlock tunnels wherein a lot of Morlocks die. There'll be action in the tunnels and a villain as well. In about six or seven issues, there's a crossover which will involve the X-Men and X-Factor. The villains will fight the X-Men (prior to the lineup change coming up in Issue 212) and X-Factor and both groups will be decimated. The fight in the Morlock tunnels is a story which will lead the **X-Men** into **X-Factor**, then into **Power Pack** 27, then into **Thor** 373 & 374 and then back into **X-Men**. We're doing a lot of crossing over! It'll be like a long, involved **Secret Wars**-style epic."

During the Morlocks crossover, Caliban will become involved with X-Factor. "The Morlock, Caliban, will become something other than what he was and it will tie in very solidly with the 'Days of Future Past' part of the X-continuity. It'll become apparent in **X-Factor** 10 and over the following issues we'll see what is happening with him."

But what about the continuing suspicion that X-Factor holds for the new Magneto? Will their suspicions finally be resolved?

"Oh, eventually, I suppose," Louise admits. "But it'll probably be another 7 or 8 months before anything is decided — maybe longer."



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AND NOW — THE GOD OF THUNDER

In **Thor** 337 (November 1983), something startling occurred. Walt Simonson began to draw and write **Thor** and a revolution took place, the first serious changes in Asgard and on Midgard since the days of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. By the time that Issue 337 ended, Thor had not only lost his hammer, but lost it to one of the most unusual characters to come down the galactic pike in many years — an alien by the name of Beta Ray Bill. Walt explains that the character was the result of a happy accident.

"Even before I came up with the character, one of the things I wanted to do was find somebody to come along and pick up Thor's hammer. I wanted to draw a line between the stories which had come before and the stories which I was doing. One of my favorite lines of demarcation in comics, of all time, is the line between the last **Jimmy Olsen** issue before Jack Kirby took it over and

Jack's first issue. Before Jack did it, it was Jimmy and his signal watch going vreee, vreee, vreee. The first issue Jack did had wild things and the mountain of judgement and all this strange stuff from out of nowhere like suddenly you were on Mars! It was just great! I didn't think I could draw that big a line for any number of reasons. DC hadn't had anybody else like him so it was a big jump, while Marvel had had all that stuff already for a number of years.

"What I had to do," Walt explains, "was go back to what were some of the basic assumptions of the strip and shake them up. Robots have picked up Thor's hammer, even Loki had picked up Thor's hammer when Stan and Jack forgot that he couldn't for awhile.But nobody had picked it up because they were worthy and I thought that would be a good place to start. I wanted somebody who could do that and seemed believable. I wanted to create a character who would make the reader wonder why he could do it. The reader would look at him and say: 'This can't possibly work! I'm outraged at this rupture of the ancient legends! How dare this guy come on the book and screw it up like this!'

"Part of what that meant was making Beta Ray Bill into a monster, or at least a guy who looked like a monster because pretty much in comics, what you look like is what you are," Walt stresses. "Good guys are handsome — bad guys are ugly. I wanted to play against that type and essentially cast the guy in the role as a monstrous-looking individual. People would assume from the way he looked that he was a bad guy — which is exactly what happened."

Walt knew his lore and felt that the readers should have realized that this bizarre character was anything but a villain — only someone who is worthy could ever pick up the hammer. Beta Ray Bill served a dual purpose, one involving a facet of Thor which dates back to his first appearance in **Journey into Mystery** 83.

"I wanted to get rid of the Don Blake character with some ceremony because he had been around a long time. So I had to create a character who would have a dual identity, sort of hand off the Don Blake identity like a football. But do it with style and ceremony."

Walt recalls the origins of the name Beta Ray Bill.

"Originally I wanted to come up with some ordinary name because his real name would be untranslateable to us ordinary folks. When you run it through a language computer it comes out Jones. But I figured that we already had an Indiana Jones, a Louise Jones and a Rick Jones and just too many Joneses already — so I settled on Bill. We had a bunch of friends over that night and we were all shooting the breeze. The name was settled on that evening, but I'm not entirely sure who thought of it."

THE DOCTOR IS OUT

Don Blake represented the human side of Thor, the side still in touch with earthly matters, far from the demons and giants of Asgard. But Walt feels that identity was played out long before.

"Don Blake was dull. He'd been around a long time and used in rather curious directions. He was everything from a general practitioner to a neuro surgeon, depending on who was writing the book. The time had come to retire him. Plus I wanted people to sit up and take notice. It's tough to know what will do that, otherwise we could do it all the time, but you have to take your best guess.

"When you're doing a comic book, if you do what the readers can predict, they won't bother to read your book. Maybe they'll come back once a year to look at it. A good part of my job is to prevent readers from feeling that way, to make them worry that the minute they're not looking, the store will be burning down behind their back. Getting rid of Don Blake is only a part of that. I got rid of him because I was bored with him and thought he had outlived his usefulness. He *was* useful in the begining. But once it was explained who Don Blake was, he should have been written out or given a complete makeover of some kind. My option when I took over was to write him out."

There exists the danger of Thor becoming so wrapped up with Asgard, Frost Giants and mythology that the human element, which had been provided by Don Blake, will be lost. But Walt doesn't feel that there's any danger of this.

"The readers still seem interested in the book despite the fact that he hasn't been on Earth much. I've run through a whole mythological cycle and Thor will be back on Earth very soon. But by doing Sigurd Jarlson (instead of Don Blake) I've been able to parody the many secret identities that have been running around comics since 1938.

"How Thor relates to people depends entirely on the writer. While it's possible to write it where he would have no contact with humanity, what I've tried to do with the gods and the stories in Asgard is suggest that in many ways the problems they have are pretty much the problems that we have. Getting rid of his mortal identity doesn't automatically dump Thor into a realm where we can't identify with him or the troubles he goes through."

It is also true that Don Blake was never a real person. In Thor 158 & 159 (back in 1968), it was revealed that Don Blake was just an incarnation of Thor created by Odin to teach his impetuous son humility.

"Don Blake wasn't really human," Walt adds. "He was just a magical construct on the part of Odin. It wasn't like Thor was really human on one side and a god on the other. I turned Thor into a frog and Odin turned him into a human, but he was no more a real frog than a real human. All of the variations of Don Blake and why he can't get a hold of his stick (to change his Thunder God identity) were explored to death in the past 20 years. It's not what I want to talk about. The readers have responded pretty well, which is not to say that another writer couldn't do Don Blake and do him justice.

"I think it's important for a book not to be the same forever. I believe that one of the things which has made the **X-Men** successful is that it is not the same 5 guys who are the X-Men. It's not

the same Storm in the same outfit. While you get a lot of outraged readers, you get a lot more readers overall. My job isn't to keep things the same. Stan and Jack did some superb stuff, but I'm not Stan and Jack and this is not 1963. I felt that something new needed to be done. Whether what I've done will stand the test of time, it does seem to be standing the test of readership. And that's really my concern. Getting rid of Don Blake hasn't been a problem for most of the readers."

Walt fully realizes that somewhere down the road it's more than likely that another writer will feel just as free to sweep his changes out, much as he felt free to sweep them in.

"It's quite probable that once I relinquish the book, someone else will bring Don Blake back. They'll have all these other problems to explore!"

THE ASGARDIAN TOUCH

Walt sets many of the stories in the fantastic realm of Asgard because he wants the book to stand apart from other comic book fare.

"One thing I've tried to stress in **Thor** is that it's different from other superhero comics. There the heroes have two identities and in one they're usually wimps. The Norse stuff gives this book a different flavor.

"I've got a story coming up where the various giants—the Frost Giants and the others — will be massing to attack Asgard because Odin is no longer around. When the enemies of Asgard find that Odin isn't there any more, they come over to Asgard and try to do serious damage. Odin's presence was a powerful incentive to the giants to leave well enough alone. Odin seems to be out of the picture on a more-or-less permanent basis. I would like to explore what the giants are going to do So they'll attack Asgard and the next cycle of stories will be the gods/giants war. The Balder mini-series was the opening and it didn't work out too well for the giants that time.It's going to work out a lot better for them in upcoming issues.

"The opening rounds of the battle will take place in Asgard, but a good chunk of the war will actually transpire on Earth. There we'll involve the gods with ordinary people. I don't think there'll be a danger of losing the reader

in mythological concerns that they can't relate to!"

When Walt took **Thor** over almost three years ago, he wasn't certain how long his interest in the series would remain. He'd never been involved with any one series for a protracted length of time before. As it turned out, he and the Asgardian got along famously.

"When I was offered the book", Walt explains, "Mark Gruenwald, who was the editor at that time, asked me if I would do at least twelve issues. Nothing hurts a book more than having a revolving creative team. I figured that after twelve issues, I would review my options. I had done two or three issues when I realized that twelve would take me to number 348 — so I decided that I would stay at least through issue 350. At the time, I thought that I'd be able to wrap up the major storylines with 350, but as it turned out, it went a couple of issues longer.

"I'd never written and drawn that many issues of one book. I thought that I would be burned out by the time that I got to issue 350. But it didn't turn out that way, I had plenty of ideas I still wanted to explore with the character. So I figured that I'd stick with it as long as doing **Thor** interested me more than doing other things. The problem with being a writer, penciller and inker all on one book is that it takes up all of your time and you can't do anything else!"

This and a new project that he wanted to begin led to Walt dropping the pencilling and inking and continuing only as the writer of the book.

"The other project fell through," Walt reveals, "but I'd arranged a leave of absence and the more I thought about it, the better it sounded. I'd already done 30 issues without a lot of time off and I thought it would be nice to get up in the morning and not have to think about Thor. Sal Buscema has taken over the artwork and that allows me the time to do the things I've wanted to do these past couple years."

Walt is excited with the reception that his work on the book has received. "I'm delighted," he remarks enthusiastically. "I certainly didn't expect it when I took over the book!"

OTHER HERO WORK

Besides taking over as the new artist on **X-Factor**, Walt Simonson has several other new projects. "I'm going to be doing a bi-monthly Star comic called **Animax**—which is what if the Road Warrior met funny animals? When it was presented to me it was so silly that I had to do it.

"I'd like to do something with the Star Slammers again (he previously created a graphic novel with the characters which had been with him even before he began to do professional work in comics) somewhere along the line, but what I don't want is an open-ended series. I'm a big Cordwainer Smith fan and what I like about his work is that the stories are all in the same universe but strung out along a timeline that runs through thousands of years. Ideally, I would like to do Star Slammers stories from time to time but not necessarily with the same characters or in the same time period. I have a story planned that would be a semi-sequel to the graphic novel. When I give up sleeping, I'll be able to work on that!"

Louise Simonson is also very busy with both **X-Factor** and **Power Pack**. "Jon Bogdanov is the new regular artist on **Power Pack**. He's also going to be doing an X-Men/Fantastic Four miniseries with Chris Claremont. I think he's somebody that should be watched. He was offered the FF but turned it down for **Power Pack**. He's going to be the hot new artist next year."

Marvel Comics is one lucky company to have the myriad talents of this remarkable couple at their disposal. And comic book readers are even luckier to have the fine work of the first family of comic books to continue to look forward to.

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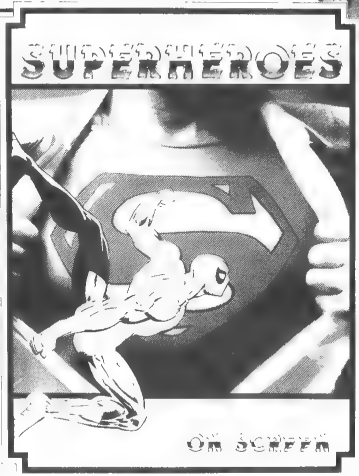

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Comics Consumer Guide

DC

7/8/88 SHIPPING

☐ ANGEL LOVE 4
(of 8) (Barbara Slate)

☐ ARMY OF DARKNESS 3
(Conway/Brozowski)

☐ HEX 15
(Fleisher/Giffen/Garzon)

☐ JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA 266
(Conway/DeMatteis/McDonnell/B. Smith) Who framed the Martian Manhunter with a murder rap?

☐ SWAMP THING 4
(Last issue) (Wein/P-reprinted Inks-C by Wrightson)

☐ TALES OF THE TEEN TITANS 71
(Wolfman/Woch/Tanghal/Beachum)

☐ THE OUTSIDERS 13
(Barr/P-I-C by Aparo)

☐ VIGILANTE 35
(Kupperberg/Patton/Magyar/Byrne) Vigilante brings his holy war to church in a desperate effort to halt a bomber's career! Direct sales only.

☐ WATCHMEN 3
(Of 12) (Moore/P-I-C by Gibbons) Is Doctor Manhattan Earth's greatest hero or its greatest menace? The answer will astound you!

☐ LIMITED EDITION DARK KNIGHT ALBUM
(By Graphitti Designs) 4,000 numbered copies, signed by Frank Miller with additional material (including an introduction and reviously unpublished drawings).

7/15/88 SHIPPING

☐ BATMAN 401
(LEGENDS tie-in) (Randall/Von Eeden) Magpie strikes again, but this time she's gone too far, snatching one of the Wayne jewels from under Batman's nose.

☐ BLUE BEETLE 6
(Wein/Cullins/Patterson) The Beetle battles teh Question.

☐ ELECTRIC WARRIOR 7
(Moench/P-I-C by Balkie) Direct sales only.

☐ ELVIRA'S HOUSE OF MYSTERY 9

☐ G.I. COMBAT 286
(Kanigher/P-by Glanzman/J. Kubert)

☐ LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES 28
(Levitz/LaRocque/DeCarlo/Lightle) Direct sales only.

☐ MAN OF STEEL 1
(Of 6) (W-P-C by Byrne/I by Giordano) A magpie stalks the streets of Gotham City and, together for the first time, Superman and Batman must track her down.

☐ AMAZING MAN 11
(Rozakis/DeStefano/Kesel)

☐ SECRET ORIGINS 8
(Levitz/Mandrake — "Shadow Lass" / Thomas/M. Anderson — "Doll Man")

☐ STAR TREK 32
(Wein/Sutton/Villagran/Brozowski & Smith)

☐ TALES OF THE LEGION ANNUAL 4
(Levitz/Giffen/KJesel) Reprinting LEGION Annual 1.

7/22/88 SHIPPING

☐ ADVENTURES OF THE OUTSIDERS 35
(Barr/P-I by Aparo)

☐ BLUE DEVIL 30
(Double-sized) (Mishkin & Cohn/Kupperberg/Cullins & Martin) Blue Devil takes on Flash's Rogue's Gallery now that the Flash is gone.

☐ BOOSTER GOLD 16
(W-P by Jurgens/DeCarlo)

☐ GREEN LANTERN CORPS 205
(Englehart/Stanton/Farmer/Patterson)

☐ INFINITY INC. 32
(R&D Thomas/McFarlane & DeZuniga) The Psycho-Pirate; Jonni Thunder and Thunderbolt. Direct sales only.

☐ SPACE CLUSTERS GRAPHIC NOVEL 7
(W-Arthur Byron Cover/Painted art and cover by A. Nino)

☐ SUPER POWERS 3
(Of 4, with a MASK insert) (Kupperberg/Infantino/Marcos) Darkseid escapes to Earth and Janus saves the Super Powers team.

☐ SWAMP THING 54
(Moore/Veitch/Alcala/Bissette) Swamp Thing's funeral!

☐ NEW TEEN TITALS 26
(Wolfman/Barreto/Tanghal) TheChurch of Blood opens its doors to the world as Brother Blood is resurrected on worldwide tv. Direct sales only.

☐ VIGILANTE ANNUAL 2
(Kupperberg/Andru/DeZuniga) Adrian Chase goes from judge to defendant, while Vigilante faces off againstCannon and Saber. Direct Sales only.

☐ WARLORD 111
(Fleisher/P-I by Randall)

☐ WHO'S WHO 21

7/29/88 SHIPPING

☐ ALL STAR SQUADRON 31
(R.Thomas/Hernandez) The origin of Robotman!

☐ DETECTIVE 581
(LEGENDS tie-in) (Cavalieri/Janson) The Penguin's trapped Batman in a skyscrapper eerie, while Godfrey sells Gotham a world without heroes.

☐ HAWKMAN 4
(Isabella/Howell/Heck) Hawks have to find the Kite Man in the middle of the Festival of Flight. Zatanna guest stars

☐ HISTORY OF THE DC UNIVERSE 3
(Last issue) (Wolfman/Perez/Kesel) Direct sales only.

☐ LEGENDS 7
(Of 6) (Ostrander & Wein/Byrne & KJesel) Starring more than 30 heroes and villains.

☐ LORDS OFTHEULTRA-REALM 6 $1.50
(Last Issue) (Moench/P-I-C by Broderick) Direct sales only.

☐ MAN OF STEEL 4
(Of 6) (W-P-C by Byrne/I bu Giordano) Lex Luthor makes his move to de-throne the Superman of Metropolis.

☐ TALES OF THE LEGION OF SUPERHEROES 314
(Levitz/Lightle/B.Smith) Originally presented in LEGION 16.

☐ TALES OF THE TEEN TITANS ANNUAL 4
(Wolfman/Hannigan/DeCarlo) Originally in NTT

Annual 1.

☐TEEN TITANS SPOTLIGHT 4
(Wolman/Andru) Jericho continues the hunt throughout Europe for the girl he once loved,as terrorists search out the deadly secret of Promethium.

MARVEL

7/7/86 SHIPPING

☐CLOAK & DAGGER 9
(Mantlo/Adams/Austin) Continues drug trial storyline

☐DAREDEVIL 236
(Nocenti/Windsor-Smith) Return of the Black Widow.

☐NEW MUTANTS 48
(Claremont/Guice/Baker/cover by Windsor-Smith)

☐NIGHT MASK 1
(Goodwin/Salmons)The adventures will range range from wildest fantasy to starkly frightening reality. The dangers, however, are always real, and dream-death for Nightmask mans very real deth for Keith, whose body Nightmask occupies. His tirteen year old wheelchair-bound sister, "Teddy" monitors Keith's dreams. New Universe title.

☐PSI FORCE 1
(Steve Perry/Mark Texiera) One is a psychic healer. One can project his astral self. One is a telepath. One can use psionic power to explode things. All are teenage runaways whose paranormal powers make them valuable commodities, which many individuals, organizations,even governments desire to exploit — or destroy. One man tries to protect them, but is murdered. The five discover, however, that as a group they can mindmeld and create a being who possesses all of their paranormal abilities. This being, the Psi-Hawk, is in the image of their fallen guardian. New Universe title.

☐WEB OF SPIDER-MAN 20
(Michelinie/Silvestri)

☐WEST COAST AVENGERS 4
(Englehart/Milgrom/Sinnott) Return of Dalmon Hellstrom and Hellcat

☐CONAN THE KING 37
(Kraar/Judith Hunt/Williamson)

☐G.I. JOE UNIVERSE 1
(Of 4)

7/14/86 SHIPPING

☐ALPHA FLIGHT 40
(Mantlo/Ross/Portacio) Marriage ofSub-Mariner and Marrina

☐AMAZING SPIDER-MAN 287
(DeFalco/Leonardi/Layton/cover by Frenz) Guest starring X-FACTOR

☐CAPTAIN AMERICA 323
(Gruenwald/Neary/Beatty/cover by Zeck & Rubinstein) The Super Patriot. Ties in to the 4th of July Statue of Liberty celebration.

☐ROCKET INC. 1
(Tom DeFalco/Ron Frenz) Jack Magnicomo is the highest paid professional athlete in the world, perhaps the most gifted physical specimen to wear a football uniform since Jim Brown, andhe has a problem. Yesterday, suddenly, by means he can't understand, he became much stronger, much faster than before. It cost him his brother's life. And that's just the beginning. He'd always thought that winning wasn't everything — it was the *only* thing. But now he's not so sure. New Universe title.

☐LABYRINTH 1
(Of 3) (Jacobson/J.Buscema/Tanghal)

☐MERC 1
(Peter David/Gray Morrow) Combat. It is what he does best. He is Mark Hazard, a Vietnam veteran who has gone on to become a soldier of fortune, selling his fighting and leadership abilities to military causes he believes in — or at least, can live with. New Universe Title.

☐FANTASTIC FOUR INDEX 12

☐THE OFFICIAL HANDBOOK OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE 12

☐SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN 129

☐AMAZING HIGH ADVENTURE 4
The Golden Eagle by Zelenz and Bolton. *Saurian Remains* by Perry and Bissette. *The Door* by Mantlo and Severin. Direct sales only.

7/15/86 SHIPPING

☐MARVEL AGE 44

☐AVENGER 273
(Stern/J. Buscema/Palmer) Debut of the new Masters of Evil.

☐CONAN THE BARBARIAN 188
(Owsley/J. Buscema/Chan)

D.P. 7 1
(Mark Gruenwald/Paul Ryan) Seven people, out of place in the world. Seven people, afraid of what they are, afraid of what might become of them. Seven of the most dangerous beings ever to walk the earth. D.P. 7. New Universe title.

☐G.I. JOE 53
(Hama/Whigham/Mushynsky)

☐INCREDIBLE HULK 325
(Milgrom/Geiger/Janke)

☐JUSTICE 1
(Archie Goodwin) The stranger is oddly dressed. Oddly enough, to excite the curiosity of the backalley scum who mean to rob him,and oh, yes, beat him senseless for fun.They want to know who he *is* first. His eyes seem to glow red as he studies them for an intense instant. Then he lifts his right arm and with waves of searing energy from his hand blows them into nothingness! "I am *Justice*!" New Universe title.

☐ MARVEL TALES 193
(Claremont/Byrne/hunt)

☐X-MEN 211
(Claremont/Romita Jr./Green) Story will take three X-Men out of the team and shake up the membership. Tie in with X-Factor, Power-Pack and Thor and Introduces Marauders.

☐MARVEL SAGA 12

☐IRON MAN ANNUAL (?)
(Owsley/Beachum/Wlacek) Theorigin of the Iron Man of 2020.

☐MARVEL FANFARE 29
(Byrne) JohnByrne's experimental Hulk story, told entirely in splash pages. Direct sales only.

7/21/86 SHIPPING

☐IRON MAN 212
(Fingeroth/Turner/Williams) Introducing the new Dominic Fortune, with the villain, the Iron Monger.

☐PETER PARKER 120
(Leiber writes and pencils/Coletta) Spider-Man vs.Spider-Man.

☐RACTALIXS 1

☐SPITFIRE AND THE TROUBLESHOOTERS 2
(Elliot Brown & John Morelli//Herb Trimpe)

☐STARRANN 2
(JimShooter/John Romita, Jr.)

Guide

☐THOR 373
(Simonson/S.Buscema) Thor runs into X-Factor and the Morlocks.

☐TRANSFORMERS 22
(Budlansky/Perlin/Akin & Garvey/cover by Trimpe) Introducing the Stuntacons a newtoy by Hasbro.

☐X-FACTOR 10
(L. Simonson/W.Simonson) Walt Simonson will become the regular artist. Tie-in with the X-Men as the Morlocks are massacred, and beginning a major change for theAngel which will result in altered powers and a new name.Tiesin with Thor #14

☐CLASSIC X-MEN 3
Reprinting the death of Thunderbird from X-Men 95, plus five pages by Claremont and Cockrum expanding the story. Then eleven more pages of story by Claremont and Bolton covering the funeral of Thunderbird...and the disappearance of the body.

☐MARVEL TEAM-UP INDEX 6

☐FANTASTIC FOUR 296
The big event! Stan Lee himself returns to help celebrate the FF's 25th anniversary. The story is by Jim Shooter, the script by Stan Lee, with pencils by Buscema/Silvestri/Ordway/Windsor-Smith/Frenz/Milgrom...Inksby Windsor-Smith/Colletta/Wiacek/Janson/Lelaloha/Rubenstein/Gordon.The cover is by Windsor-Smith. Plus — the return of the MoleMan and the Thing.

☐SAVAGE TALES 7

☐HOWARD THE DUCK: SUPERSPECIAL 41
(Fingeroth/Baker)

COMICO

☐ROBOTECH MASTERS 9
(MikeBaron, Neil Vokes and Keith Wilson inks)

☐JUSTICE MACHINE 3
(Of 4) (Bill Willingham/Mike Gustovich.)

☐JONNY QUEST 2
The death of Jonny's mother, and a flashback revealing how Race Bannon joined Dr.Quest and his son. William Messner-Loebs/Wendy Pini/Joe Staton)

☐ROBOTECH, The New Generation 9

THE FOLLOWING ARE DIRECT SALES ONLY
ECLIPSE

7/1/86 SHIPPING

☐SCOUT 9

☐TOR 3-D 1
(Joe Kubert)

☐TALES OF TERROR 7

☐KELLY GREEN 1
(Leonard Starr/Stan Drake)

7/8/86 SHIPPING

☐THE NEW WAVE 3
(Mindy Newell/Lee Weeks/Ty Templeton)

☐THE CRISIS CROSSOVER INDEX 1

☐ESPers 1
(James D. Hudnall/David Lloyd)

☐THE SPIRAL PATH 1
(Of 2)(Steve Parkhouse)

7/15/86 SHIPPING

☐AIRBOY 1
(Chuck Dixon/TimTruman/Tom Yeates).

☐CROSSFIRE & RAINBOW 2
(Of 4) (Evanier/Spiegle)

7/22/86 SHIPPING

☐CHAMPIONS 3

☐THE NEW WAVE 4

7/29/86 SHIPPING

☐DNAgents 11

☐MIRACLEMAN 10

☐SPIRAL PATH 2
Conclusion.

☐KELLY GREEN 2

☐AIRBOY 2
FINAL

8/27/86 SHIPPING

☐NEXUS 20
(Mike Baron/Steve Rude/John Nyberg) plus *zone* by (Baron/Mark A. Nelson.)

☐BADGER 17

☐DRAGONTAM 27
(Jim Starlin)

7/31/86 SHIPPING

☐GRIMJACK 28
(John Ostrander/Tom Sutton/Paul Gulnan) Plus (Ostrander/Dei Close/Hilary Barta.)

☐ALTER EGO 4
(Of 4)

☐AMERICAN FLAG SPECIAL 1
Creator/writer/artist Howard Chaykin returns for the First full length, deluxe AF Special! And the First preview of his new graphic novel series, as Reuben Flagg makes a wrong turn and finds himself in themiddle of ...TIME!

7/18/86 SHIPPING

☐HAWKMOON: JEWEL IN THE SKULL 4
(Of 4)

☐JON SABLE, FREELANCE 42
(MikeGrell)

ILLUSTRONE

8/10/86 SHIPPING

☐WALT DISNEY'S COMICS & Stories 511

☐MICKEY MOUSE 219

☐UNCLE SCROOGE 210

☐DONALD DUCK ±45

QUALITY

☐JUDGE DREDD 1

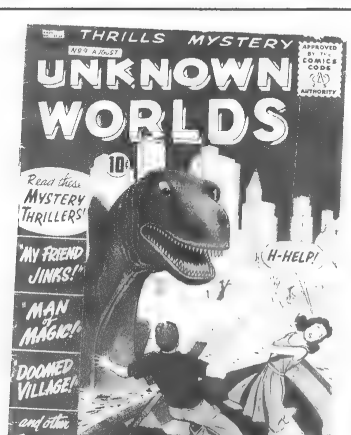
☐ROGUE TROOPER 1
(Gerry Finlay-Day/Dave Gibbons)

☐ 2000AD 7
(Alan Moore/JimBaikie) Plus (Gerry Finlay-Day/Dave Gibbons)

☐SAM SLADE 1
(Wagner/Gibson)

SILVER AGE

BY WILL MURRAY



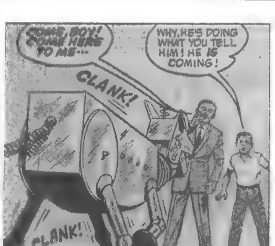
Once upon a time, back in the Silver Age, before the days of comic shops and independents, there was the American Comics Company...

That may seem a strange way to describe a long-defunct comic book outfit, but when I look back on the early Sixties and good old ACG, I feel a forlorn, nostalgic twinge. Could it really have been so long ago that such titles as **Adventures into the Unknown, Unknown Worlds, Forbidden Worlds** even yes, even the immortal **Herbie**, could be bought at any newsstand for a mere twelve cents?

I don't imagine that there are a lot of ACG collectors out there today. As a comics company, it was not exactly on the leading edge of the field—despite the fact that they pioneered the first all-horror comic book, **Adventures into the Unknown**. Even back when I was buying them off the stands, I passed them up rather than miss a current issue of **House of Secrets** or **Journey into Mystery**. I might never have bothered with the ACG line except that one day the kid next door happened to give me a copy of **Adventures into the Unknown** 126, August, 1961, containing the unforgettable story, "Heavenly Heavyweight."

Illustrated by Ogden Whitney, a versatile artist with a clean, serio-comic style, "Heavenly Heavyweight" was a tear-jerker of a story about a prize fighter who is killed in the ring, goes to heaven, and seeing his wife grow old and destitute, wins a chance to return to earth to help her out. The fighter, Ted Peters, resumes his career under another name, and turns every purse over to his widow, Francie, who doesn't recognize him thanks to some hair dye and the passage of time. One day, she discovers her benefactor is a prize fighter and watches one of his fights. Only then does she recognize his characteristic style—and the shock of the recognition kills her. The sad ending was actually a joyous one. Ted and Francie are reunited in heaven.

SILVER AGE



I didn't know it at the time, but I was reading a story that would be hailed as one of the greatest ever to grace an ACG comic book. I also didn't know that it was a bald steal of a 1941 film called *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*, but that's immaterial. All the ACG qualities were present in that single story. The sentimental plot, believable characters, supernatural doings and emotional ending. After that, I made a point to pick up ACG books when I had spare change.

RICHARD E. HUGHES

The man responsible for that story was the one who was responsible for vitually every ACG story—good and bad—between say, 1956 and 1957, editor Richard E. Hughes, whose comic book career began in the Golden Age when he created such characters as the Black Terror and Fighting Yank and Pyroman for Nedor, occupied a position akin to the one Stan Lee held at Marvel: he wrote all of his own material. Except where Lee signed everything he wrote, Hughes employed a battery of pseudonyms, signing his yarns, Ace Aquila, Lafcadio Lee, Kurato Osaki, Shane O'Shea, Zev Zimmer, Gregg Olivetti and literally two dozen others. Hughes went to the extreme of including tiny artist conceptions of his assorted aliases which headed lead stories. Thus, readers got to see what Pierre Alonzo, Bob Standish and other scribes looked like—never dreaming it was all a tremendous hoax.

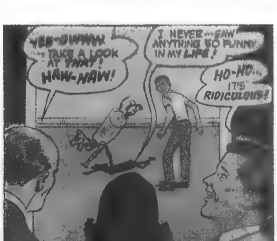
Hughes, who had been ACG's editor since its founding in 1946, was amazingly prolific. And like any prolific writer, he generated his share of junk. Most of his ACG work was pleasant, human interest science fiction and fantasy on a par with what was being written back then. But every once in a while, Hughes pulled off a truly memorable story. He did this often enough that after awhile readers began sending in their list of all-time favorite ACG stories—again, never dreaming one man wrote them all.

FAVORITE STORIES

One such story was "The Machine Named Spotty" in **Adventures Into the Unknown** 138. It was about a ruthless criminal named Snake Matapolis and a lonely little boy, Eddie Williams, the son of the judge who sent Matapolis to prison. The eccentric Professor Ormsby takes pity on Eddie when someone buys a puppy named Spotty from a pet store before Eddie can convince his father to buy the pup for him. Eddie is heartbroken, so the professor builds him a clunky looking robot dog, which Eddie names Spotty. Everyone laughs at Eddie's mechanical dog, but a warm bond forms between the two. When Snake Matapolis breaks out of jail and goes after Eddie and his family, Spotty comes to his rescue, but is shot after electrocuting Matapolis' accomplices.

Although damaged, Spotty struggles to its steel paws as Matapolis prepares to shoot Eddie. Somehow, he leaps for the criminal's throat. Both of them die during the struggle. And neither Professor Ormsby nor the Judge can understand how the robot could have been motivated to protect the boy. It was only a machine. The story ended on a sad

SCI FI WITH A HEART!



note: Eddie, still lonely, is troubled by dreams of the pet he once had—a machine with a heart.

Another Ogden Whitney little-boy-with-an-unusual-pet story that scored high with readers was "My Friend Jinks" in **Unknown Worlds** 9. It was about Jimmy, a rich boy bored by his sterile life. One day he goes to the zoo, and at an isolated pond, encounters a dinosaur who lives in its waters. Jimmy makes friends with the reptile, whom he calls "Jinks," but no one will believe Jinks exists. Until Jinks emerges from the pond when two toughs jump Jimmy. The army is called out and in swift order, Jinks is exterminated. But this story had a happy ending. Jimmy's parents wake up to their benign neglect and except for the occasional sad dream of his lost dinosaur, Jimmy is content.

If these plots sound simple, they are. This was Hughes' secret. He told a clear, uncomplicated story with a twist and an emotional climax. And he turned his better scripts over to his star artist, Ogden Whitney, who possessed a genius for bringing hokey ideas like a robot mongrel to appealing life.

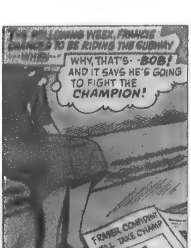
Probably Hughes most complicated effort was "The People Vs. Hendricks," from **Unknown Worlds** 36. It was another one that still lives in the memories of ACG fans. The story recounted the ordeal of Horace Hendricks, a scientist on trial for the murder of his son, Richard. Richard Hendricks was another lonely Hughes character. Since childhood, Richard was a brilliant prodigy, but for some reason girls shun him. So Professor Hendricks builds him a robot girlfriend. This is why the prosecutor believes Hendricks killed his own son—because he was falling in love with a robot.

But when the robot girl takes the stand, the trial takes a strange twist. She claims to be a live girl. Taking the witness chair himself, Hendricks at last reveals the full truth. His son was a kind of android, created as a baby and allowed to grow to adulthood. This was why other people rejected him—they sensed his unhuman nature. It was Richard who tried to build a robot girlfriend. But his father disconnects the robot-making machinery and substitutes an actress pretending to be a robot. But she, too, rejects Richard. Enraged, Richard takes an ax to the device, and is electrocuted in the act. A photograph of Richard's metallic skeleton lying in state proves Professor Hendrick's innocence, and he is allowed to go free—a sad and lonely man.

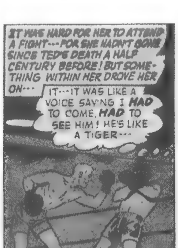
That story was drawn by EC great Johnny Craig, who also did another ACG classic. "The Grave Train" from **Adventures into the Unknown** 152. It's the story of Dexter Vandine, a mentally retarded drifter who wanders from menial job to menial job, his dream of one day riding the Gravy Train keeping him going. The Gravy Train is a fable his father had told him as a child.

Accidentally getting involved with some other drifters who plan to hijack a million dollar cash shipment off a passing train, Dexter is shot. But he manages to get aboard to prevent a train wreck, saving many lives but losing his own.

The next thing Dexter knows, a huge train appears on the tracks and he's taken abroad, treated like royalty and it's only when he looks out the window and sees the earth below that Dexter Vandine—no longer Dopey Dex—realizes he is at last on the Gravy Train.


THE FOLLOWING WEEK, FRANCIS SEEMED TO BE RIDING THE GUSHY
WHY, THAT'S--BOB! AND IT SAYS HE'S GOING TO FIGHT THE CHAMPION!
FORMER CHAMPION HELL TAKE CHAMP

SO HE IS A PROFESSIONAL FIGHTER···AND HERE'S HIS RING RECORD! AND AFTER EVERY FIGHT···HE BROUGHT ME MONEY! THIS WHOLE THING'S FISHY···WHY ALL THE COVERUP···WHY IS HE DOING IT?


IT WAS HARD FOR HER TO ATTEND A FIGHT···FOR SHE HADN'T GONE SINCE TEDDI DEATH A HALF CENTURY BEFORE! BUT SOMETHING WITHIN HER DROVE HER ON···
IT···IT WAS LIKE A VOICE SAYING I HAD TO COME, HAD TO SEE HIM! HE'S LIKE A TIGER···

THERE WAS ALWAYS A TWIST ENDING —BUT A HAPPY ONE!

LOSERS TRIUMPHANT

Richard Hughes seemed to have an affinity for alienated, underdog characters. So many of them were losers, but somehow through luck or good nature, they accomplished wonderful things including turning back alien invasions of earth. Hughes eschewed the fifty foot tall monsters popular with his competition and instead did a lot of ghost stories. ACG ghosts were always, for some reason, a flat green. They usually dwelt in a place called the Unknown, ruled by cowled green authority figures. Hell was also a familiar ACG location, and Satan appeared often. No one knows much about Richard Hughes, but in his stories, true happiness seemed only to be found beyond the grave. One writer who worked for Hughes in the Fifties described him as "a man who seemed to be living under a sentence of death," so perhaps Hughes' afterlife fixation had a personal basis.

One of the earliest stories to make a hit with readers had none of these ghostly elements, but it seemed to haunt poor Richard Hughes the rest of his career. "Herbie's Quiet Saturday Afternoon" appeared in **Forbidden Worlds** 73, and starred the redoubtable Herbie Popnecker.

Herbie appeared, without warning, and without explanation. He was a corpulant kid who possessed unusual powers. Today he would be called a mutant and introduced with a two-part booklength origin. But Hughes trotted him out for a brief 8 pages, in which he a) talks to a tiger in a zoo, b) walks on air in order to rescue a senator whose plane has gone down in the ocean, c) encounters an advance party of aliens from the invasion-bent planet of Xanthro and e) disintegrates said force when they vaporize his next-to-last lollipop. Lollipops were Herbie's vice, and apparently the source of his weird powers.The running gag in the stories was that Herbie's parents were entirely oblivious to his incredible powers, and thought he was just a "little fat nothing."

If Hughes had introduced Herbie with an origin story, I doubt the character would have caught on. But readers were infatuated with the inexplicable Herbie.

Hughes had a thing against continuing features. Readers begged for Herbie's return. Hughes resisted. By the time he caved in, more than two years had passed. Hughes must have thought he'd exorcised the unwanted demon, but again after a two-year gap, a third Herbie tale

appeared.

Then, in 1962, the Plump Lump made a major resurgence, cameoing in an **Unknown Worlds** story called "1,000 Years Ago in 1962" and then appearing three more times in **Forbidden Worlds.** At one point, Herbie's name entered the masthead and it looked, for a fearsome moment, like the magazine had been retitled **Forbidden Worlds Presents Herbie.** But cooler heads evidently prevailed.

Ultimately, Herbie was given his own comic book. At least that's what I imagine happened. For all I know, he *took* the damn thing!

Herbie appeared to be a concession to almost unprecedented popular acclaim, but there were other forces at work in the comic book industry by 1965. For one thing, Marvel Comics was successfully dropping superheroes into their fantasy magazines. Readers began demanding Hughes join the parade. Hughes—correctly—resisted, but the tide had seemingly turned. He introduced Magicman in **Forbidden Worlds** and Nemesis into **Adventures into the Unknown** early in 1965. They were, in their way, typical ACG creations—superheroes with supernatural premises. They fitted Hughes' format perfectly, down to resident figures from the Unknown. **Unknown Worlds** was allowed to continue untampered with.

THE END APPROACHES

All this lasted but two years. The superhero craze had passed, and the comic book field was retrenching. Hughes, sensing the wind shift, dumped his superheroes in 1967. He also added a new title, **Gasp,** perhaps to replace **Herbie,** which Hughes killed the same month. Herbie's calculated absurdity did not wear well after 23 issues. **Gasp** did not last long, either. In fact, the whole line was troubled. Sales were down, and there had been wholesale defections among the artists. Ogden Whitney had gone over to Tower's **T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents,** along with Chic Stone and a few others. Steve Ditko turned up in ACG's pages, but he was only passing through—as had such artists as John Rosenberger, John Buscema and John Forte before him.

By the time the ACG line was folded, Hughes was down to relying on the likes of Paul Reinman and Bob Jenny—hardly scintillating artistic talents—to carry his books. The final issues of **Adventures into the Unknown, Forbidden Worlds, Unknown Worlds** and **Gasp** were cover-dated August, 1967. After that—silence.

Richard Hughes' career after this time is uncertain. He is supposed to have done some scripting for other companies under another name, but he seems not to have found a new niche in the industry. He died in 1973, a forgotten giant if one ever lived.

The strange thing about ACG was that it was partially owned by Harry Donenfeld, who also owned DC Comics. Other than the clue that Kurt Shaffenberger drew for both firms, I would never have suspected that DC and ACG were related. Both operations were kept strictly separate. When ACG collapsed, DC ended up with all their rights.

Curiously, DC has done nothing with any of those rights. Or maybe not so curiously. The vast majority of the ACG output is of interest only to fans like me—who grew up reading the stories and retain an affection for them that is more nostalgia than anything else. Nemesis and Magicman are hardly candidates for revival—although worse characters have been dragged back from their paper graves. The Web comes immediately to mind.

Of the ACG line, only Herbie deserves revival. But with Richard Hughes dead and Ogden Whitney literally vanished from the scene, any such revival would be folly. Besides, even Hughes and Whitney couldn't sustain the character's unreplicatable charm for long.

And so, barring unusual events, ACG is just a pleasant memory—a funny little dreamland of long, long ago. Once upon a time, there was the American Comics Company—and whenever I dig into the ACG part of my collection, I'm very, very glad there was!

CF

WILL MURRAY IS THE WRITER OF NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO'S DOC SAVAGE SERIES. DUENDE: THE HISTORY OF THE SHADOW AND, UNCREDITED, OF A MAJOR MEN'S ADVENTURE PAPERBACK SERIES

STRIP SEARCH

BY RON GOULART

Today science fiction comes in several fairly accessible forms. But although you can find it in movies, paperback books and magazines, there's very little to be encountered in newspaper comic sections anymore. It was not always so and in this column and the next couple we'll be looking back across the years and tracing the development, growth and waning of sci fi in the funnies.

IN THE BEGINNING

There were science fictional elements in newspaper comics almost from the start. In those long ago days back near the turn of the century the funny papers lived up to their name and serious continuity was nowhere to be seen. It was widely believed then that flights of fancy and far-fetched speculation appealed especially to the immature. Since the brightly colored Sunday comic pages were initially intended primarily for kids, wild fancies and fantastic inventions were given a place. Some of the early features were works of fantasy pure and simple, others were preoccupied with science and technology. These latter approached the wonders of science with that same mixture of anticipation and apprehension that has been a characteristic of science fiction throughout its history.

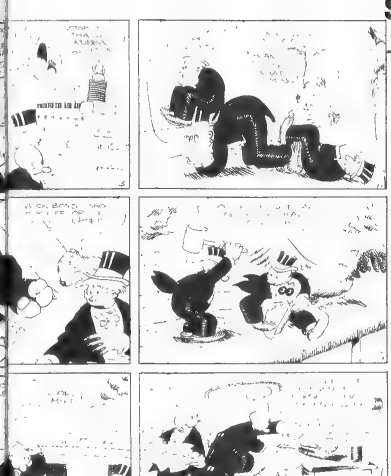
Amateur inventors abounded in the early comics, showing up in strips of their own and guesting everywhere. The Hearst papers even featured occasional Sunday convocations where characters from several strips—the Katzenjammer Kids, Foxy Grandpa, Happy Hooligan—got together on one page to fool with some fantastic invention such as an airship or a submarine. Willie Westinghouse Edison Smith, whose career fell in the years between 1905 and 1910, was a bright lad who did nothing but invent. Week after week he concocted such things as a mechanical watch dog, an automatic baby carriage pusher, a robot kangaroo, a mechanical monkey, a windcycle and a snowmobile. Needless to say, Willie's inventions always malfunctioned by the final panel.

The undisputed comic page genius of the first decade of the 20th Century was a patient, prosaic man, a onetime sign painter named Winsor McCay. McCay was preoccupied in his strips and pages with dreams and what went on beyond the wall of sleep. His most successful explorations took place in a bright handsome Sunday page entitled **Little Nemo in Slumberland**, which began in 1905. Though technically a dream fantasy, the Nemo page was actually an inspired amalgam of fantasy, psychology, Carrollian logic, vaudeville, minstrel show and science fiction epic. Nemo awakened at the end of each Sunday page, nightshirted again and safely back in or about his own bed,

FELLOW CITIZENS, I AM ELECTED COLLECTOR OF CITY ASSESSORS, I WORK TO GIVE YOU AN HONEST ADMINISTRATION
TURN 'T OFF, BOOBS, WE CAN'T VOTE UP HERE
ULK ULK!
ULK
SWISH

but a continuity was always maintained and each subsequent segment of dream began where the last one left off. McCay involved his youthful hero, named perhaps after Verne's adventurous captain, with all sorts of science fantasy elements, including undersea races, space travel, giants, dragons, lost empires and monsters. Fluctuations in size always fascinated McCay and Nemo and his nightside cronies were frequently encountering incredible shrinking people and similarly afflicted plants, animals and buildings. In a 1907 sequence, Nemo and his pal Impy become giants themselves and climb up the multistoried buildings of New York City—this was decades before either King Kong or the Empire State Building. The year 1910 found Nemo and company undertaking a trip around the universe aboard a very **art blyway** zeppelin. The journey, which lasted several months, included stops on the moon and on Mars.

SCI FI FUNNIES PART I



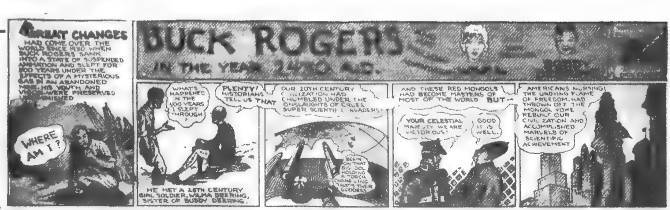
THE TWENTIES OF THE 25TH CENTURY

As the century grew older and the newspaper syndicates realized that enormous numbers of adults were reading comic strips along with the kids, a good deal of fantasy and science fiction dropped from the funnies sections. The 1920s were more interested in living in the present and favored family sagas like **The Gumps**, lowlife picaresques like **Barney Google** and hapless waif melodramas like **Little Orphan Annie**. An exception, an oasis of unreality, was Rube Goldberg's **Boob McNutt**. This eccentric Sunday page commenced in 1915, ran through the 1920s and well into the 1930s. The continuities were devoted to the less than brilliant hero's adventures with mad scientists, weird creatures, space expeditions, winsome women and, of course, the intricate inventions that put Goldberg's name into the dictionary.

Toward the end of the Twenties, perhaps sensing the Depression decade that was coming, comic pages started turning serious. Adventure strips showed up and the first nonfunny scifi feature made its debut. "When I began my long sleep, man had just begun his real conquest of the air in a sudden series of transoceanic flights in airplanes driven by internal combustion motors. He had barely begun to speculate on the possibilities of harnessing sub-atomic forces...The United States of America was the most powerful nation in the world...I awoke to find the America I knew a total wreck." Thus spoke Anthony Rogers when he woke up in the pages of the August, 1928 issue of **Amazing Stories** after a nap of five hundred years. He repeated his Rip Van Winkle act a few months later, this time in the new strip called **Buck Rogers**. Syndicator John F. Dille had noticed Phillip F. Nowlan's novelet in the pioneering Hugo Gernsback scifi pulp and asked him to convert his yarn into comic strip continuity.

Dille decided the hero needed a snappier first name and borrowed one from the then popular movie cowboy Buck Jones. Buck Rogers' America, in those early years when Nowlan was still getting used to the future, was an unusual place. There were flying girl soldiers who sported rocket guns and wore jumping belts, there was television and even electro-hypnotic machines. Yet when Buck wants to go looking for the missing Wilma, his other new friends help him into the cockpit of a 1920s biplane. Perhaps the airships were due to artist Dick Calkins, who was in the Air Corps Reserve at the time. In addition to contemporary aircraft, **Buck Rogers** contained a good deal of contemporary racism. The ruined United States is now ruled by Mongol Reds, the Twenty Fifth Century version of the Yellow Peril. Next to exterminating Caucasians, the Mongols' favorite pastime is mating with them. The resulting halfbreeds were scorned by Buck and his pals.

The idea of looking into the future had become strong again in those months when America was heading inexorably for the Crash that very nearly wrecked the nation five hundred years ahead of Nowlan's predicted date. **Buck Rogers**, despite wretched dialogue and artwork that caused the heebie jeebies, became a popular strip. It made it easy for readers to dream, as they seemed then, impossible dreams. "I am inclined to believe it was not so much how the episodes were drawn but what was **happening** in them that made the strip such a success," Ray Bradbury has observed about the early days of the strip. "What, specifically, did Buck Rogers have to offer? Well, to start out with mere trifles...rocket guns that shot explosive bullets; people who flew through the air...disintegrators which destroyed, down to the meanest atom, anything they touched; radar-equipped robot armies; television controlled rockets and rocket bombs." New and fascinating


A GREAT CHANGES HAD COME OVER THE WORLD SINCE BUCK ROGERS SANK INTO A STATE OF SUSPENDED ANIMATION AND BECAME THE VICTIM AND SUBJECT FOR EXPERIMENTATION OF THE EFFECTS OF A MYSTERIOUS GAS IN AN ABANDONED MINE. HIS YOUTH AND VIGOR WERE PRESERVED UNTOUCHED
BUCK ROGERS IN THE YEAR 2419 A.D.
WHERE AM I?
WHAT'S HAPPENED HERE? I DON'T UNDERSTAND THROUGH
PLENTY! HISTORIANS TELL US THAT
OUR 20TH CENTURY CIVILIZATION HAD CRUMBLED UNDER THE ONSLAUGHT OF CELLS SUPER SCIENTIFIC WARFARE
AND THESE RED MONGOLS HAD BECOME MASTERS OF MOST OF THE WORLD
BUT
YOUR CELESTIAL MASTERS ARE VICTORIOUS
GOOD WE ARE IN HELL
AMERICA'S NURSING THE UNDYING FLAME OF FREEDOM HAD BROKEN THE POWER OF THE MONGOL HORDE. REBUILT OUR CIVILIZATION AND WITH THE HELP OF MARVELS OF MODERN SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENT
NE' MET A 25TH CENTURY ADONIS NAMED BUDDY DEERING, "MYSTER OF BUDDY DEERING."
3. BUDDY DEERING HAD JOINED THE BOY AIR SCOUT UNION WHERE HE STORED WILMA AND BUCK ROGERS WHEN IN MONGOLIA AS AMERICAN AMBASSADORS TO THE CELESTIAL MONGOLS
LIEUTENANT, I HAVE AN IDEA HOW TO KNOCK OUT IT'S TO MAKE A FLYING BELT INSTEAD OF A JUMPING BELT
HMM-LET'S SEE YOU AND YOUR LABORATORY AND WE'LL TRY THE EXPERIMENT, BUDDY
AFTER MANY FAILURES THEY FINALLY SUCCEED!
OH!
THE ANTI-GRAVITY MATERIAL WILL LIFT THE BELT WITHOUT
AND THE AIR COMPRESSOR WILL ADD WEIGHT WHERE I WANT TO PUSH DOWN
THEN CAME THE FIRST TRYOUT—
WATCH MY SOCKET, HONEY!
THOSE ROCKET MOTORS ON THE BACKS OF THE WINGS GIVE YOU LOTS OF POWER!
WHIRLING AIR PUFF NO. 471

props and locales were being introduced to daily paper readers and a new popular arts stereotype had come along to join the cowboys and detectives. **Buck Rogers** began in January of 1929 and from then on funny papers would never be without at least one sf hero.

THE THIRTIES OF ALL-AMERICAN BOYS

The decade of The Thirties witnessed the advent of a platoon of them. The next to pop up was **Jack Swift**, which came to the daily comic pages in the fall of 1930. Written by Cliff Farrell and drawn by Hal Colson, it matched the early **Buck** in awfulness of both continuity and artwork. Jack, who was possibly a poor relation of Tom Swift, was a cleancut young fellow noted for his brilliant inventions. Chief among these was a rocket ship that was "a combined airship, streamlined bus, sea vessel and submarine." Jack's gang included his girlfriend Joan, his mentor old Professor Lucius Long, his best pal Jimmy Smith and Jimmy's sweetheart Una. After saving our planet from an assortment of dangers that included giant penguins, they set out to explore the universe. Out in space they encountered even worse problems, everything from giant Ionians to runaway asteroids. Jack was as All-American and narrowminded as Buck Rogers and didn't think much of most of the alien peoples he met, usually referring to them as "those freaks." His strip foided in the mid Thirties.

Brick Bradford was introduced in August of 1933 by the Central Press Association, a little brother of Hearst's King Features that specialized in servicing small towns. Although Brick did appear in some of the larger Hearst chain newspapers, it was in the many lesser sheets that he made his initial impact. The hick syndicate was offering a Frank Merriwell strip at the same time and there is something of that strong-jawed, cleanliving college hero from an earlier era in the redheaded Brick. Not too surprising, since William Ritt was writing both strips. According to comics historian Jay Maeder, "Years later his family would remember a story—perhaps apocryphal, perhaps not—that Ritt, his imagination fired by the science fiction tales sweeping the pulps, had once casually tossed off a story idea to his friend Philip Nowlan, who had thereat fleshed it into a novelet called **Armageddon 2419 AD** and sold it to **Amazing Stories**. Whatever the merits of that account...Ritt's family remembers his habit of murmuring unpleasantries whenever he saw **Buck Rogers**."

Whether or not Ritt had inspired the novelet that inspired the Buck Rogers comic strip, he decided to try a science fiction strip of his own. It was drawn by Clarence Gray in a pulp illustration drybrush style. A redhead like their hero, Gray had been a staff artist on the Toledo **News Bee** and he was considerably better than the likes of Calkins and

BRICK BRADFORD
BY
WILLIAM RITT
AND
CLARENCE GRAY
SORRY, SENORITA, I MUST HAVE THOSE PLANS OF YOUR FATHER'S INVENTION!
WHILE BRICK AND DR. SOUTHERN ARE ENGAGED IN BATTLE WITH HIS FOLLOWERS, PABLO THE OUTLAW ENTERS THEIR CAMP—
I HEAR APRIL'S VOICE AND THAT'S ONE OF PABLO'S THUGS ON GUARD BY THE FIRE!

Colson. Ritt had put in time on several newspapers and kept his job as editor and columnist on a Cleveland paper throughout the years he worked on the strip. A student of history and mythology, and a borrower from the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs and A. Merritt, Ritt conceived some of the most complex, prolonged, and often wacky, SF continuities of the 1930s. He and Gray had never met until shortly before they began producing the adventures of Brick and they apparently never became close friends.

In the first years Brick Bradford led two separate lives at the very least. "The Sunday page dabbled in futurism early on," Maeder has pointed out. "The daily strip employed a separate set of conventions." In the daily episodes Brick started off as a daredevil aviator. Soon, however, he was involved with a lost city in South America and went on to tangle with crazed Asiatics bent on world conquest, got himself reduced to teenie weenie size by a Shrinking Sphere, defeated a titanic robot, etc. The tabloid-style Sunday page, introduced in August of 1935, tossed Brick right into fantastic swords & sorcery situations. He spent his early Sunday time in the Land of the Lost, a place rich with monsters, wizards, damsels in distress and pirates. The sort of location Merritt had been offering guided tours of in the pages of the **Argosy** pulp magazine for the past decade. As the Thirties wore on the Sunday Brick visited other out of the way places such as the Middle of the Earth, the reign of Queen Anne and the year 6937.

The time travelling he did after gaining access to a nifty invention called the Time Top. Designed by Professor Horatio Southern, the Top was intended to "unravel the secrets of the past and probe the mysteries of the future." Southern and his marvelous gadget originally had a strip of their own. Entitled **The Time Top**, it appeared as a topper to the earliest Brick Sundays. I suspect that the bulky time machine must've fallen down from upstairs and landed in the old redhead's panels. At any rate, by the late 1930s he and the professor and lovely April Southern were spinning their way through time and space.

Ritt and Gray did not exactly prosper from the feature during its early years. In 1941, when King Features offered them a new contract for the daily strip, Ritt was compelled to write to the syndicate. Among his requests was —"Would the Syndicate consider this schedule of weekly payment: Gray, increased to $125 weekly; Ritt, increased to $100 weekly?"

Next time we'll consider **Flash Gordon**, the bestlooking scifi strip of the Thirties and Forties and one that initially paid its scriptwriter the handsome sum of $25 per week!

RON GOULART HAS PENNED OVER 150 BOOKS, TONS OF MAGAZINE PIECES, A PILE OF COMIC BOOKS AND A COUPLE OF NEWSPAPER STRIPS. HE HAS PUBLISHED EXTENSIVELY ABOUT PULP, COMIC BOOK AND NEWSPAPER STRIP CHARACTERS CREATED BY OTHER PEOPLE AND WON PRIZES FOR MYSTERY, ESPIONAGE, WESTERN AND SF CREATIONS OF HIS OWN.

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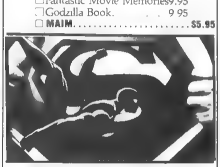

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Joe Barbera has been a prime creative force behind the animation industry for more than four decades. His work with longtime partner Bill Hanna on Tom & Jerry in the Forties is considered classic.Cartoons and characters he helped create in the Sixties, such as Quick-Draw McGraw, Huckleberry Hound, Yogi Bear and the Flintstones established Hanna-Barbera Productions as an industry leader. They were the first studio to launch an animated series on prime time television. One of them, **The Jetsons**, was recently revived for syndication with a couple dozen new episodes. This has proven so successful that another of Hanna-Barbera's Sixties' series, **Jonny Quest**, has also been recalled to duty with new adventures. And Joe Barbera is still very much involved with the creative end of things today, as evidenced on the recent profile done on him on the CBS newsmagazine **Sixty Minutes**.

"In the last year and a half, we've had seven requests to obtain the property," says Barbera in describing the continuing interest in **Jonny Quest**. "One request was to do it as a weekly hour long action-adventure series. Two requests were for motion pictures. Last Friday afternoon I was at United Artists discussing doing it as a major feature. Interest in it has never gone away. We're starting with 13 new half-hours and might possibly go to 39 new half hours."

But there will be some changes in the new **Jonny Quest**, although nothing so drastic as to undermine the style and intent of the original show.

"The difference now is that we're going to be introducing new gadgetry and creations to use as protective rather than offensive weapons. There'll be no Uzis. There's such an overkill on all of that stuff. Everyone is running around with one now including little kids. Death and destruction all over the place. We're doing glamorized, creative things which are way ahead. For instance, we have a new plane for them in which we incorporate two additional smaller planes in the wing structure and they separate. We call it a Sea-Skimmer. It's a vehicle that goes across the water. When it stops we pick up two dirt-wheelers which can tear through the jungle at 80 or a hundred miles an hour. We're inventing vehicles. We have wrist-fans, as we call them—a gimmick which will fan out into a protective shield.

"I had a meeting yesterday with 22 writers and the whole thing was about philosophy," Barbera stresses. "We don't want to do what you see out there right now. We have to be creative and go beyond with everything we do. Today they don't walk or run through a jungle, they'll ride through on a hovercraft. The other way is tele-matter transportation or teleportation.

"Added to our sophisticated new gimicks we're also introducing a girl—the daughter of a colleague of Dr. Quest's who has to be left with him at the last minute, so you're

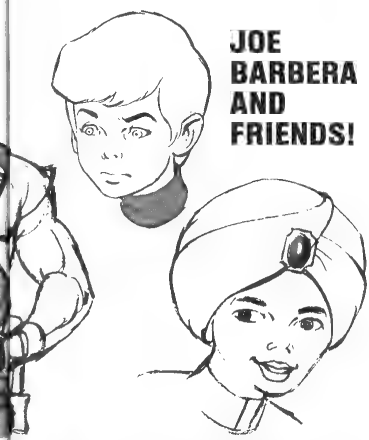
immediately going to have a conflict with the two kids. But she turns out to be a terrific girl. We'll also be using the dog, Bandit, more. Everything will be upbeat and moving forward. We'll change Race's outfit in certain scenes and hopefully it'll be a hit."

ONLY IN A CARTOON...

In the early Sixties, cartoon adventure series which did not feature anthropomorphasized animals as the heroes were rare. When **Johnny Quest** was conceived for prime time, Hanna-Barbera brought in live-action writers to work on the show, thus accounting for its unusual approach.

"We had great live-action writers," says Barbera. "But the thing we had to do with every story was to insert the visual touches which could only happen in a cartoon. For instance, they were able to use sunken ships as springboards, to zoom up over the villain and land facing the other way. So we window-dressed all the scripts. The

JOE BARBERA ON JONNY QUEST



live-action writers tend to do what we call talking heads. A talking heads means that you take a storyboard that has six sketches and the dialogue and plot is being laid out and you turn pages and no one has moved. Our philosophy is—do the plot, but have them zooming through the air in a new design of plane or chased through the jungle in a newly designed vehicle. Don't just stand there and talk."

Action was of paramount importance in the original Jonny Quest, but it was often the sort of action one normally expected to find in a live action series, not in a cartoon. While admitting this was so, Barbera also feels that such things were generally tempered to avoid explicit acts of violence and gunplay.

"At that time we were able to use rifles very much like what Rambo is carrying around, but we had more comedy." The heroes also tended to find ways of disabling an opponent without resorting to guns. "We had a hidden submarine base with all kinds of hardware and lumber around because they were building things. In a scene, the heavy is at one end of a pile of two by fours and Race is at the other end. He took a two by four, pulled it back, pushed it and clobbered the guy in the head. He didn't shoot him. We began to put that kind of stuff into the story and got rid of heavies by immobilizing them by dropping something over them."

Barbera feels that out of the 26 scripts to the original episodes of **Jonny Quest**, 13 of them could easily have worked as motion pictures. One of those he singles out is "Dr. Zin's Robot Spy."

"In that episode they've got this new, incredible light beam which Quest is working on. It's sealed off behind barriers, fences and guards when suddenly from out of space comes this thing which seems like a fragment. They can't figure out what it is so they finally decide to pick it up and haul it in to the compound and close it in a huge kind of working area. Then in the middle of the night, this round spot on it opens and it's a red eye. Long, spindly mechanical black legs come down and it lifts up and looks like a black widow spider. But the heavy, Dr. Zin, is controlling it and is able to photograph everything that's in there through its eye and see what's going on. That was the Trojan Horse story where they brought it in and it was indestructable.

"You remember 'The Seven Gargoyles?'," Barbera asks. "You tracked along all these stone gargoyles and when you reached the end, that one turns around and looks down. They had gotten rid of one of the gargoyles and replaced it with their own, who was a dwarf acrobat. This was in Europe somewhere and he was inside the house trying to find America's new device that Quest was there to keep safe. The headquarters of the heavies was in a nearby graveyard down into a mausoleum. It was a terrific story."

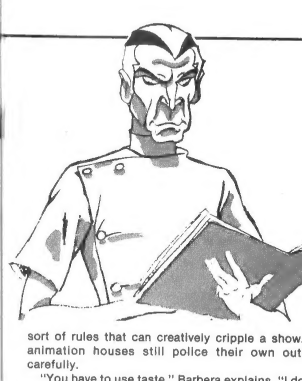
When the original **Jonny Quest** episodes are rerun following the new 13 this fall in syndication, there will be a few alterations in the old shows. All will feature the updated series titles.

"Also," Barbera adds, "we'll reinsert spot scenes if we want to change anything, but basically they'll be the same shows. People want to see them today." Regarding the new episodes, Barbera stresses, "We won't be sacrificing the integrity of the show. We'll just be bringing it up to now and maybe beyond."

THE BOUNDARIES OF SYNDICATION

What can and cannot be done in cartoons has changed quite a bit since Race Bannon used hand grenades back in the original 20 years ago. Some feel that syndication, which operates outside the strict guidlines of network shows, is one possible way to create cartoons without the

SIZE COMP
TO RACE



sort of rules that can creatively cripple a show. But the animation houses still police their own output very carefully.

"You have to use taste," Barbera explains. "I don't know what they're doing on **G.I. Joe**, but I presume they use a lot of weapons—I don't know whether they use real guns."

One advantage of syndication is that one is not left at the mercy of inscrutible network programmers.

"You remember **Space Ghost**?" Barbera asks. "Well, that went through the roof. That had one of the highest ratings ever. It was doing so well...but the network decided not to order any new ones in order to save money. They'd just rerun the old shows. Was that a smart move? Now that one was way ahead of its time. We had great equipment in there, great characters and a great villain called Metallus. Do you remember **The Herculoids**? That was over sixty share (of the audience). That is another strange thing. People always say that they love this character or that, but then why doesn't the network order another series?

"If you were put in charge of a network tomorrow, you would want to do what you think is funny—number one Number two is you're going to try to do something that is going to get ratings. So you go out and get the pulse of what you think is going to work. Number three is you want to do it yourself because you want to impress your big bosses that it was you that did it. So this is what's going on.

"Of course there have been a few disasters. That's okay. Times change. The whole world changes, and I think we're riding with it. We kicked off a new Sunday morning show and that's being expanded now to two hours. The new **Jetsons** are working. We have a whole new ploy—two new ploys, really—for the '87-88 season. We have a new prime time animated show which is daring. We'll see if the network will bite."

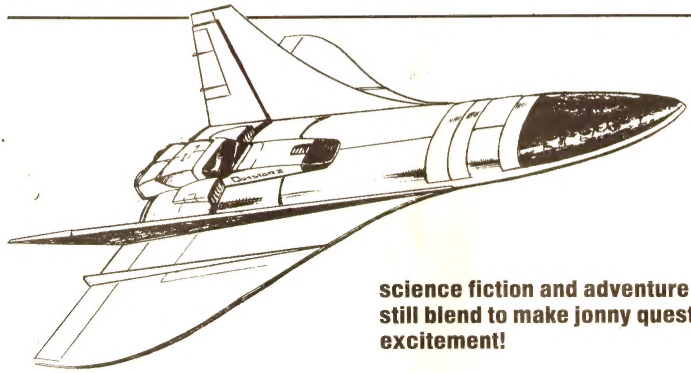
Another area which Hanna-Barbera is getting into is live-action production due to the number of animated shows flooding the market.

"We're just about to close the deal on a feature called **The Stone Fox**, which is a classic book—a real terrific tear-jerker. I'm also outlining five half hours for a live syndication series, and I'll tell you why. There's a glut of cartoons out there this year. I think that everything is going to sink under its own weight. I think there must be forty series out there now."

Many of those series reflect the craze of robot cartoons, which Barbera feels has both good points and bad.

"We're doing the **Go-Bots**, but I think you run into a very simple, basic problem. It's very hard to get personality, as witness the Droids. All the good work that's done on it, you can't take a droid to bed and cuddle it. That's the problem with those kinds of things. You've got a big market that doesn't warm up to tin things, and a toy company has to have a big winner. If it goes out there and it isn't, they have to get off it as fast as they can. That isn't easy. They find that they can't create stars by sheer spending of money. You can't do it. It'll have to find its own level. If you go back over the years of animation and list how many new stars have come out of the motion picture animated characters, and now the television characters—I mean *stars*. Disney, in all its years has basically created one star: Mickey Mouse. Donald Duck kind of comes in second but there's really only one. In all the years we worked at MGM we created only Tom & Jerry because you have to put your heart into that to make them live. Warner Brothers had Bugs Bunny and that's really their big one. Road Runner is kind of second. Walter Lantz had one—Woody Woodpecker.

"When we got into television we were, I believe, the only ones who were able to create stars. Our track record is Yogi Bear, the Flintstones, Scooby Doo—that's still here after 16 years. We've got the Smurfs which is number one for five years. We're the only studio that's created stars for tv. What happened is the clamor for **The Jetsons** finally paid off and we got them back on the air. And now **Jonny Quest** has shown up. I think the reason is that they were solid, well-crafted characters with developed personalities. We've done quite a job of creating stars with longevity. That's why we're delighted with **Jonny Quest** coming back because that was a star show—a star character. Before there was Indiana Jones we had Race Bannon. I think we could well have influenced people—I don't know if they'd ever admit it, though. Let's look at it this way. How close to things like **Raiders of the Lost Ark** was that type of show? Jonny Quest went to Egypt, to jungles, into temples. We did all of it!"



science fiction and adventure still blend to make jonny quest excitement!

THE ORIGINAL TOM & JERRY

In the Forties, when Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera were working for the MGM cartoon department, they created the enduring Tom & Jerry. Fans agree that the best cartoons in the series were those done by the original creative team.

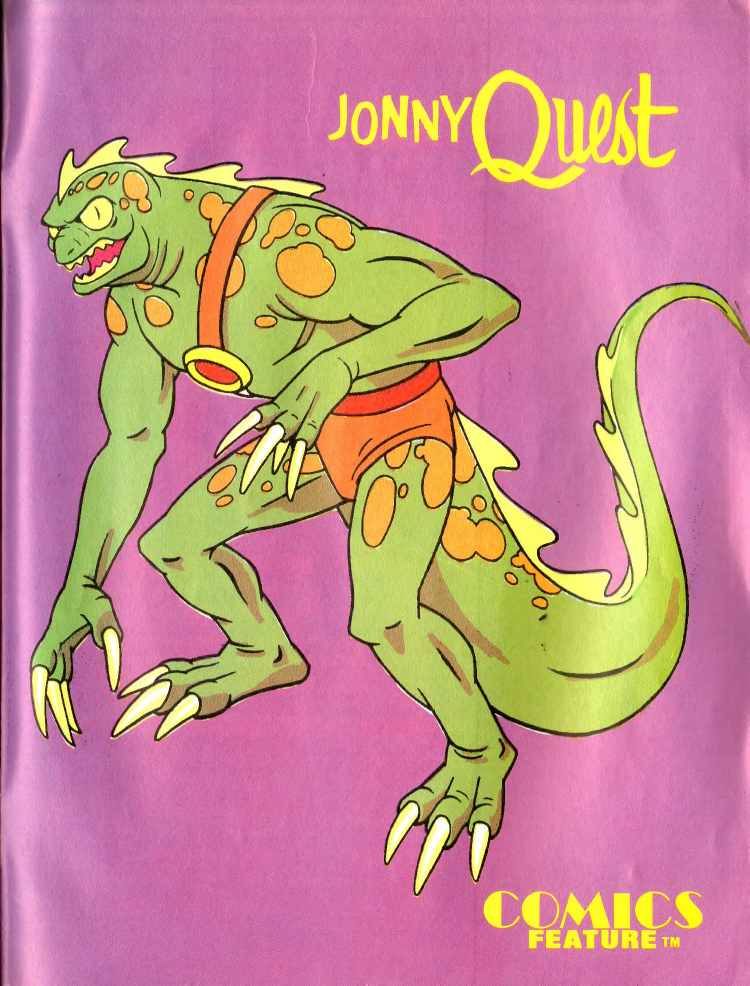
"Make sure you see the ones that we did," Barbera advises. "They let a couple of other people sink them and they made some terrible mistakes. In fact, I'm talking a new concept with them for it right now.

" We used to do six to eight of those a year," Barbera continues. "I didn't write the story, I drew the story in production — not a storyboard but production sketches. The close-up, the second shot, the pan...The whole thing that I think worked was that we wouldn't do an old joke. An old joke is the one where you go through the wall and leave your silhouette. So you say to yourself, how do I run through the wall and not do that? The other way is the character hits a wall, flattens out and slides down flat. Well, we'd done all that. So what I used when I wrote the story was to come up with something else which hadn't been done in the same joke. Your audience sees a familiar piece of business and then they're surprised by the new twist you put in. In the old days we used to take the cartoons out and preview them in a theatre and have cards, just like for a feature. When the logo came on that said Tom and Jerry, the roar that would go up in the audience was unbelievable. Some of the laughs were so big! Of course you'd say that it's a violent joke. It was Tom after Jerry, the poor innocent little guy who only wanted something to eat but Tom is so devilishly going after him and delighting in it. But we did visual jokes which I presume we couldn't do today."

This was underscored when, over a decade ago, Joe Barbera pitched the old cartoons to a network. At the meeting where they were shown, they were greeted with howls of laughter, whereupon the network programmer remarked, "There's no way we could get away with showing these today." But thanks to the more open syndication market, the original **Tom & Jerry** cartoons are being shown somewhere every single day.

Coming back to the present and the return of Jonny Quest, Barbera once again underscores that this is going to be a revival with a lot of thought, effort and talent applied. Regarding the new episodes he states, "Everybody says of their shows that 'Ours is going to be different,' but we're going to make it different, believe me. Or it isn't going to go out of here!"

CF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